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Between Heaven and Hell

R. W. Southern

JACQUES LE GOFF
La Naissance du Purgatoire
909pp. Paris: Gallimard.

The publication of Jacques le Goff's study of Purgatory is an important event, not only in itself but as a portent and promise of things to come. Traditionally, text-books of Catholic theology and books of theological controversy have been the places to look for discussion of this subject. And these books naturally treat it either as the unfolding of a doctrine implicit in a dozen or so Biblical texts, or as a deviation from Biblical teaching, prompted by avarice, ambition, or other unworthy motives. Le Goff will have nothing to do with this closed world of theological discussion. His aim is to write the history of the doctrine in its social, economic and intellectual setting, and this is surely the right approach for a historian.

Nearly all important theological developments are brought about by pressures, social or otherwise, from outside the theological system, and the doctrine of Purgatory is no exception. It is one of the small handful of concepts, largely derived from the Bible, which have radically influenced the behaviour of large numbers of European people over several centuries. The concepts of sanctity and kingship are other members of this privileged group; but, important though they are, their influence on the daily lives of the population has never been as widespread or as obessional as the idea of Purgatory. And, quite apart from its influence on daily habits, it played an important part in lifting the cloud of uncertainty and gloom about the after-life which lay over the early centuries of European history. It made possible a more relaxed attitude to this world and the next: it turned the straight and narrow way of salvation into a highway trodden by a multitude of feet.

The subject lies at the centre of the revival of Europe in the twelfth century, and it is a very welcome event to have it treated by a historian who has made a notable contribution to the social and economic history of this period. Le Goff defines the areas of his main interest as "les rapports entre croyance et société", "les structures mentales", and "la place de l'imaginaire dans l'histoire". He confesses to being no theologian, but



"Skeletons and Played Men", an engraving by Domenico del Barbiere (1506-1565) which is included in a sale of "Important Old Master Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts" at Sotheby's, New Bond Street, London W1 on June 18. Barbiere was a member of the School of Fontainebleau which numbered other Italian artists, such as Rosso and Primaticcio, who had been brought to France by Francis I.

hopes to do justice to the theological content of the problem. I shall later express some doubts about his success in fulfilling this hope, but in providing sketches of a long succession of theologians no one could be more conscientious. My reservations are concerned rather with his attitude to theology as a self-consistent body of knowledge.

The work is divided into three parts, each of which is of roughly similar length: "Avant le Purgatoire", "Naissance du Purgatoire", "Le triomphe du Purgatoire". The precise titles, as we shall see, are important for le Goff's interpretation of his subject.

The first part takes the story from the remotest origins to the end of the eleventh century. So far as Western Europe is concerned, this was, in le Goff's view, a period when Purgatory did not exist. On this point he is sternly insistent, and he deals some pretty hard knocks to those who have been

foolish enough to mention Purgatory in this period. The extent to which he is right on this point will need further enquiry. It was certain that some kind of purgatorial process existed for some souls for minor sins - so much seemed to be clear from St Paul's words about a man's works in wood, hay and stubble being burnt, while the man himself was saved. But which souls and what sins were thus capable of being purged were all in doubt. It was only safe to say that purgation was for the few, probably mainly monks who had been guilty of minor lapses. For ordinary mortals the choice lay starkly open between Heaven and Hell, with the strong likelihood of the latter.

The second section of the book deals with the twelfth century and the birth of Purgatory. And it may be said at once that le Goff is here at his most vigorous and brilliant. He has some extraordinarily good pages on the individual theologians of the period, and he catches its theological spirit in a phrase which, though he applies it to Peter Lombard alone, could even more appropriately describe the whole generation of theologians in the early twelfth century whose work was summed up by the Lombard: "Il s'esquisse un regroupement vers le centre".

Unfortunately, as it seems to me, le Goff does not place the main weight of his argument at this point. He reserves the birth of Purgatory almost to the end of the century, and his main reason for doing this is that the word Purgatory did not exist before this date. It is an essential part of his method that he attaches immense importance to the appearance of the word: "Je suis nominaliste et je crois à la signification capitale des changements de vocabulaire". In one way or another this principle is reiterated many times, and deeply affects his treatment of Purgatory. "Il n'y a pas de Purgatoire

avant 1170 au plus tôt." How do we know? Because the word did not exist before this date. "Un lieu inconnu n'existe pas tout à fait." Before the word, "Purgatoire est encore à naître"; "entre 1170 et 1200, le mot purgatoire - et donc le lieu - est né"; purgatory is "essentiellement lié à sa localisation"; "la naissance du Purgatoire est un phénomène du tournant du XII^e siècle au XIII^e siècle." The list of such emphatic statements could be prolonged, but these will suffice. They express the central idea of the book, and they reflect an important strain in le Goff's thinking, not only about Purgatory, but about the way history should be written, and about the shape of medieval history as a whole.

Now, we can certainly agree that inventions of new words are important historical events, and that such events have too often been neglected by historians. But it is quite doubtful whether they have the significance which le Goff attaches to them. At least in this case, I am not convinced that anything new came into existence with the new word. Certainly not a new localization of Purgatory, for nothing could be more clearly localized than the fire (not the fire of Hell), which the Northumbrian farmer Dybbelm saw in his visionary experience in the seventh century. And even when the new word came into existence, we find almost at once that it had several different meanings, some localized, others not; and the most localized of all, St Patrick's Purgatory (perhaps the first example of the word known to us), was of a very special kind, a sort of private purgatory in Ireland, to which pilgrims could go to be purged of their sins in their lifetime. The word did not bring consistency of meaning. But above all, it did not bring classification of the role of the purgatorial process in human life: that had already been achieved while theologians still had to make do with a variety of phrases such as *ignis purgatorius*, *poenae purgatoriae*, *locus purgatorius*, etc.

What purpose, then, did the new word serve? The answer is, simply, convenience. The reason why it appeared when it did was probably no more than this; the subject was so often talked about that it was convenient to have a handler coin than had previously existed for the purposes of communication. Gold coins took the place of many silver pennies in the next century for the same reason. If we are looking at language for signs of a

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conceptual break-through, we might better look for it in the increasing use of the adjective *purgatorial* a hundred years earlier.

I have already suggested the le Goff's exaggerated respect for the noun *Purgatory* leads him to postpone the dating of the moment of change almost to the end of the twelfth century. This has very important consequences from several points of view. It leads him to see *hell* where there is growth, and to place the moment of growth too late. He puts the "spring-time" of scholasticism in the late twelfth century, and despite all the excellent things he says about early twelfth-century theologians, his new chronology leads him to undervalue their importance. It was they who first succeeded in enlarging the very narrow scope of the purgatorial process in the older theology, and provided hope for ordinary sinners. Lombard, who died in 1160, was the last great theologian of this formative period and his account of the role of Purgatory is of the highest importance. After quoting the old authorities about the minor sins which were amenable to purgatorial treatment, he goes on to declare that any sin truly repeated, committed by purgatorial pains after death, and that minor (venial) sins are purged even if they have not been repeated.

This was the new idea of Purgatory as it affected the lives of ordinary people. It was to have immense elaborations of practice added to it in the course of the next three hundred years, but the central message was already there: any reasonably repentant, reasonably obedient, sinner could hope to go to Heaven via Purgatory. The purgatorial process was on its way to becoming an extension of the religious discipline of this world, rather than an upper crust of Hell; or, rather, given the accumulative tendencies of scholastic thought, it became both — like this world in function, and like Hell in imagination.

This was not a change which took place in isolation. It was part of the complete recasting of the religious discipline of life for everyone in Western Christendom from top to bottom, and in every area of life in definitions of doctrine, in enforcement of social disciplines, in payments of tithes, in requirements of confessions and penance. All this was brought about gradually under the management of a greatly enlarged clerical class, but the intellectual foundations were virtually complete by the middle of the twelfth century.

Le Goff places the essential change in the idea of Purgatory nearly fifty

years later than this. Necessarily, this late date affects his account of "les rapports entre croyance et société", which he has announced as one of his main themes. Briefly, his account of the connection between the new system of thought and the development of society can be found in two main statements. The first is this: "Je crois donc que ce qui s'est passé d'essentiel pour le système de l'au-delà dans le Christendom du XII^e siècle c'est qu'au système hiérarchique Ciel-Enfer (ou Paradis-Enfer) il a substitué un système ternaire: Ciel-Purgatoire-Enfer." There are many remarks which might be made about this statement, but for the moment it will suffice to point out its strictly formal emphasis: the essential link between the new idea of Purgatory and society, in le Goff's view, is to be found, not in the enlarged function of Purgatory, but in the structural change from a binary to a ternary system.

Following this line of reasoning, he seeks the appropriate social context by looking, not for societal pressures or needs, but for a comparable structural switch. This means looking for a middle term between the heaven of aristocracy and the hell of peasantry. The obvious candidate is the bourgeoisie. For a moment this useful class seems in danger of nomination. But, in a passage which deserves to be quoted, the temptation is resisted:

Que l'on m'entende. Il serait absurde de dire que la bourgeoisie a créé le Purgatoire ou que le Purgatoire découle d'une façon ou d'une autre de la bourgeoisie. Il s'agit plutôt d'une coïncidence, comme lecture de la naissance du Purgatoire, c'est qu'elle fait partie d'un ensemble lié à la transformation de la Chrétienté féodale dont une expression essentielle a été la création de schémas logiques ternaires avec introduction d'une catégorie intermédiaire. Le modèle ternaire solidement dans des structures socio-économiques, c'est pour moi certain. Mais il me paraît non moins assuré que la médiation des structures mentales, idéologiques et religieuses est essentielle au fonctionnement du système. De ce système le Purgatoire n'est pas un produit, mais un élément.

What is clear from this is the very great importance which le Goff attaches to a structural correspondence between the system of thought and contemporary society. I fear that I cannot see the need for such affinities, but it is useless to argue about perception, and the best comment I can make is to attempt an alternative

account of "les rapports entre croyance et société", on the importance of which we are both agreed. In its barest outline my account would go like this. From the seventh to the eleventh century, the Church was wholly dependent for its existence and prosperity in Western Europe on the great military and political families who had adopted Christianity and imposed it on their peoples. These great families relied for their hopes of salvation and for success in this life on massive benefactions to monastic communities engaged in permanent prayer and penitential exercise, and on other expedients such as (at first) delayed baptism and (later) last-minute monastic vows. It was in this settling that a penitential system of extraordinary rigour could hold out hopes of Heaven to those who could pay a very high price for vicarious penances in this world.

The basis for this system began to change rapidly in the eleventh century with the growth of productivity and population. These changes created new opportunities of government and social organization. More particularly, they brought the Church a major new source of income in tithes, which gradually came to exceed its revenue from every other source. This was a major factor in changing the pastoral aims of the Church. It was no longer dependent on the huge benefactions and goodwill of the top aristocracy, but

increasingly dependent on, and concerned with, the goodwill and co-operation of the whole population. The new income brought into existence a large body of parochial clergy, and (when these had been somewhat meagrely provided for) it still left a huge surplus for intellectual enterprise, as well as for large-scale organization. It was out of this surplus that the new effort towards theological definition and practical discipline was financed. This effort had, as its main purpose, the creation of a workable system of religious discipline for everyone. The enlarged role of Purgatory was a small part of this system. It would be cynical to say that the co-operation of the new mass of people affected by the new disciplines and regulations, but it is perfectly true that new disciplines cannot be imposed unless there are rewards at the end of the day. The huge penances of the past work off by the employment of vicarious penitents, would simply not work for the mass of the population. Besides being socially insupportable, they were clearly unjust and rationally absurd. The great strength of the new disciplines was that they could be followed without disrupting the ordinary processes of life. But could they suffice, if kept with reasonable fidelity, for salvation?

Whether it is better than Professor Goff's I cannot say. But it is the best I can pay to a learned and stimulating book, which was certainly written to vex the reader into inquiry rather than to soothe him into acquiescence. And, having spent so long on the central core of principles and methods, I will leave the reader to enjoy in peace the rich variety of imagery and argument which fills the third section of the book on the "triumph of Purgatory".

It was at this point that the hitherto

A Purgatory

Old people, hammering
Across the table
Their mutual disagreements
As they are able.

One says: 'Lay them out there,
The bulbs.' The other
Objects, there is nothing else to object to
And there must be bother.

Seventy creeps on to eighty;
Half-blind eyes
Round the kitchen table, shielded from the north wind
And the open skies.

Stepping heavenward over the rubble
Of enough years, battles, importances
The meaning has gone, the quarrel remains
To the last cornice.

C. H. Sisson

Clerics in control

Peter Hebblethwaite

S. J. CONNOLLY
Priests and People in Pre-Famine
Ireland 1760-1845
338pp. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan,
1977.
0 312 64411 6.

The history of Ireland is bedevilled by contrary myths. In Catholic pulp rhetoric, Ireland "was once an island of saints" whose priest and people shared a common social origin and a sense of oppression. The Protestant counter-story has been that Ireland was dominated by priests who imposed their repressed sexuality on the people and encouraged them in "pseudo-patriotic acts of violence. There is now a new generation of Irish historians who can look more coolly at their past. Among them is S. J. Connolly. Though not the recording angel, he has been what is possibly the next best thing for a historian: an archivist in the Public Record Office in Dublin.

It has become commonplace to make a sharp distinction between pre and post-famine Ireland. The hungry Fifties so disrupted society that Ireland had to make a fresh start. The Church, as the most important Irish institution to have survived the famine intact, played a vital part in this reconstruction of society. At the same time it introduced "new forms of ultratopianism" which had not been known in Ireland before. Many of the

features that appear characteristic of Irish Catholicism today — such as devotion to the Sacred Heart — were mid-nineteenth-century innovations.

Connolly is not directly concerned with the question of continuity or difference. His study is confined to the pre-famine period. But obviously any detailed treatment of the pre-famine period invites comparisons with what came later. He is painstakingly scrupulous in his handling of evidence, and very reluctant to generalize. In this he differs from William Kinsella, Catholic Bishop of Ossory, who told the Irish "have the virtues dear to God, but they are ignorant, violent, intemperate, and as incapable of resisting the first impulse as savages".

Connolly produces some evidence to support the Bishop's harsh judgment. But that is not why he quotes it. The interest of the remark is that it shows that Bishop Kinsella felt that the Church had to struggle to impose its values on the people. The clergy were the agents and the people were the object in a process of evangelization. And the clergy were not proving very successful. "Popular beliefs" (in fairies, witchcraft, magical healing charms, omens, protective rituals and calendar customs) proved hard to eradicate. "The religion of the Catholic," writes Connolly, "cannot be understood simply as an inferior version of the religion of their social superiors." It had a certain autonomy, a usefulness and capacity for survival. It was what the clergy had to contend with.

In one area they appeared to be successful. The clergy in pre-famine Ireland preached a strict sexual morality. Imposed discipline by punishing offenders, and endeavoured parish priests patrolling the country ready, in any spring, his shillelagh at the ready, to enforce it. It worked. Pre-famine Ireland had a low rate of illegitimacy and pregnancy. But, argues Connolly, this does not demonstrate the influence of the clergy, for in these matters they merely endorsed the already existing attitudes of Irish society. Bishop Kinsella, indeed, thought they went too far, and regretted that "a woman who is suspected is lost for her whole life". He also thought the treatment extended to innocent bastards was sexual morality was not what the clergy preached: it was the fact that the pre-famine farmers and smallholders had to run a delicately balanced family by an unplanned marriage or the pregnancy of an unmarried daughter. The clergy also denounced drinking, but since it was socially acceptable, they were not effective.

The clergy were also unsuccessful in restraining the violence endemic in Irish society. But they certainly tried. There was much preaching on the need for "public order" and the weapon of ecclesiastical censure was often used against offenders in the eighteenth century. But "disorder" was of two kinds. There were brawls and feuds

that could involve whole families or villages. Here the priests sometimes intervened as mediators and imposed fierce public penances — three times round the church on bare knees, for example. Political dissent and the violence to which it led ("vile and wicked conspiracies") were denounced by the French Revolution had shown what could happen when the floodgates of equality were opened. "Where," asked a pastoral letter in 1798, "shall you find tillers, if all become gentlemen?"

The priests of this period were mostly "loyalists", in Dr Ian Paisley's sense. They upheld the authority of the British crown and prayed for the King. Their motive was twofold. First, they took St Paul's injunctions to obey temporal rulers with the utmost seriousness. Second, they hoped that good behaviour would be rewarded by growing tolerance (and they were not mistaken in this hope). In their some classic texts on alienation which would have delighted Karl Marx. "Instead of seeking by unlawful your condition, console yourselves, my dear brethren, with the assurance you suffer in this world, if it be not your own fault, shall be amply rewarded in the next." In some places priests acted as informers and mobilized their "respectable" parishioners in support of law and order.

This was by no means universal

however, and there were differences between the bishops and the lower clergy on these questions. Connolly concludes that although the priests sought to eliminate violence from Irish society, the violence would have been far worse had they not been there. In even more vigorous, especially after the French Revolution had shown what could happen when the floodgates of equality were opened. "Where," asked a pastoral letter in 1798, "shall you find tillers, if all become gentlemen?"

The most surprising fact to emerge from Connolly's admirably patient and thorough study is that pre-famine Ireland, far from being "priest-ridden", imagined there was a priest shortage. In 1800 the number of Catholics per priest or curate was 2,670. On the eve of the famine in 1840 it was 2,996. This may seem a generous provisioning of clergy. But one has to remember that, as Connolly remarks, since Irish religion was very ritualistic it was therefore extremely labour-intensive. By 1871 there was one priest for 1,560 parishioners. This improved ratio was no doubt the condition of the imposition of clerical control in the reconstituted post-famine Church. Order replaced comparative anarchy.

NATURAL HISTORY

The evolution of evolution

Redmond O'Hanlon

JONATHAN HOWARD

Darwin
182pp. Oxford University Press.
£1.25.
0 19 287556 6

WILMA GEORGE

Darwin
160pp. Fontana. £1.75.
0 00 636502 7

Marking the centenary of Darwin's death, Jonathan Howard has produced an intellectual tour de force, a classic in the genre of popular scientific exposition which will still be read in fifty years' time. Wilma George, on the other hand, author of the best biography of the co-discoverer of evolution by natural selection yet written, *Biologist Philosopher: A Study of the Life and Writings of Alfred Russel Wallace* (1964) and, more recently, of *Gregor Mendel and Heredity* (1975), has made a much more detailed domestic, semi-biographical study, an uneven but indispensable book which sometimes reads like a synopsis for the definitive Darwin biography which she is uniquely qualified to attempt, and whose style sometimes resembles the characteristic course of the gundi (one of her research specialities) amongst the Saharan desert rocks: it moves in short bursts at tremendous speeds from one point of interest to another, and can be exceedingly difficult to follow.

Wilma George obviously feels constrained by the Modern Masters series format, and no wonder. As Jonathan Howard remarks, himself writing to the even tighter specifications required of Oxford's *Great Masters*: "Darwin's biographers are faced with an embarrassment of riches. His parents were both children of distinguished families that have earned biographical attention in their own right. Darwin then married his first cousin, and the family seems to have thrown practically nothing away ever since. . . . The notes and records of a whole lifetime's scientific work have been maintained virtually intact." Five volumes of his letters were edited by his son Francis (and a new edition of more than 13,000 letters, edited by David Kohn, is due to begin to emerge from Cambridge early next year); many of his correspondents were scientists of great distinction and their own letters to Darwin in turn survive, leaving "an almost unbelievable complete documentary record of the life of one of the great revolutionaries in the history of ideas".

Howard solves the problem by sidestepping it altogether, and concentrating instead on Darwin's "overwhelming importance . . . for the development of biological thought". Darwin's childhood and schooldays in Shrewsbury; his abortive attempt at Edinburgh University to follow his father into medicine; his studies for the Anglican priesthood at Cambridge; his selection, at a mere twenty-two, as gentleman naturalist to HMS Beagle on her 1831-1836 circumnavigation of the globe ("The voyage of the Beagle has been by far the most important event in my life and has determined my whole career. . . ."), his happy marriage, his unhappy health, and his retirement into the massively productive isolation of Down House in Kent, visited only by a chosen handful of the best scientists of the day: these are all disposed of in eight pages.

The summary, like the rest of the argument, is brisk but never breathless, and Howard unerringly highlights the right moments in Darwin's life, like the *autumn mirabilis*, for instance, from 1837 to 1839, when he "produced the complete theory of evolution in about 900 pages of private notes written in his spare time. All the main issues which occupied him for the rest of his life were dealt with piecemeal in a torrent of creative insight of extraordinary intensity".

With a clarity and pace which he might have learned from his acknowledged mentor, P. B. Medawar, Howard then proceeds to trace the origins and map the changing fortunes of these main issues. By the

beginning of the eighteenth century, he tells us, "Anglican orthodox opinion had virtually abandoned revelation in favour of the conformity of nature to man's needs as the primary source of evidence for the existence and attributes of God"; and by 1836, the year of Darwin's return from his great voyage, the clever and influential Cambridge philosopher of science, William Whewell, could still consider "the whole mass of the Earth from pole to pole, and from circumference to centre as employed in keeping a steady progression in every system from the bottom to the top."

Natural Theology sanctioned the intense study of the adaptations of animals and plants to each other and to their surroundings, and William Paley's *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity collected from the Appearances of Nature* (1802) gave Darwin more pleasure than any other part of his Cambridge syllabus. It was an important influence: concentrate on the Evidence, remove the Theology, disconnect the hand of God from its intricate workings in the countryside, and natural selection is almost revealed.

Natural Theology was a counsel of optimism, an invitation to contemplate the precisely attuned delights of the butterfly cabinet and the Rectory orchard, and much of its protective intellectual effort was devoted to the exclusion of the unpleasant problem of the existence of evil from its mental Garden of Eden, set in the English shires; there must have been a higher and less evident purpose in the mind of Paley's Great Designer when he created earthquakes, floods, famines and tapeworms; and the Anglican cleric Thomas Malthus's *Essay on Population* (1798) appeared to provide some kind of empirical justification for such suffering in nature — populations increase in a geometrical progression, by leaps and bounds, which, unchecked, would soon outrun the limited resources of the world. Struggle and disaster maintain the *Providential status quo*. It was this generalization, taken entirely out of its original context in 1838, which supplied Darwin with the idea of the struggle for existence.

By combining such simple enlightenment with the concept of evolution itself, which reached him from his brilliant grandfather Erasmus, and from Lamarck's *Philosophie Zoologique* (1809) filtered through the disapproving pages of Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, Darwin discovered himself to be in possession of a tough new world of his own imagining — which nevertheless seemed to make clear patterns and sensible interrelations amongst all the multitudinous particulars of nature in history which he had so delightedly collected since boyhood.

In looking at Nature, it is most necessary . . . never to forget that

every single organic being around us may be said to be striving to the utmost to increase in numbers; that each lives by a struggle at each period of its life; that heavy destruction inevitably falls either on the young or old, during each generation or at recurrent intervals. Lighten any check, mitigate the destruction ever so little, and the number of the species will almost instantaneously increase to any amount. The face of Nature may be compared to a yielding surface with ten thousand sharp wedges packed close together and driven inwards by incessant blows, sometimes one wedge being struck, and then another with greater force.

This is quite contrary to the emotional and doctrinal dictates of Natural Theology: the destruction of individuals is a necessary part of the constructive change of species (natural selection operates on a population of organisms; individuals do not evolve); and the process is a "selfish" one, natural selection being unable to produce modification in any one species exclusively for the good of another. Nor are separate creative acts necessary for each species: given a population from north to south the world will also be those which vary most markedly, being adapted for different conditions, their hereditary characters nevertheless linked by an indefinite chain of intermediate variants — more or less stably maintained by the conservative, normalizing effect of sexual reproduction, which produces progeny with characters, on average, midway between those of their parents. But come a breeding barrier of some kind (and on the necessity of this Howard is much more adamant than Darwin), a line of mountains pucker up from the earth's crust, an earthquake wrinkling it into valleys, an inlet inching it from the sea, a river tumbling into a new bed, or even a geographically localized disease (not even Darwin ever imagined that the continents themselves might put ponderously to sea away from each other), and the varieties will go their different ways towards becoming distinct species.

Howard's relaxed asides on modern Darwinian thinking are welcome — an insistence on the need for this isolation of breeding populations in the formation of new species, for example, would have solved one of Darwin's major difficulties. Variation, heredity and multiplication were obviously intrinsic to living things, but isolation was a messy, illogical process, extrinsic. Yet without it even widely different, artificially selected domestic animals ("I do not believe that any ornithologist would place the English carrier, the short-faced tumbler, the runt, the bar, pointer, and fawn in the same genus") breed together freely (their offspring, like the feral pigeons in our cities, revert to rock doves). Darwin simply assumed that the

Heron

First, I see him turning
with the tide, coasting over
marsh and alluvial meadows
green with the under-water hopeful
light of showers swathed across the fells;
then settled, dark as slats against
the brighter sea, watch-keeper
of his lean tower, hawkish-eyed
for slow fish, whatever unstable moves.
Thin-shanked as reeds but firmly
solate, brooding over the sliding
of water past him.

Gulls pass in a storm of white
and busy shouting, their hunger
brusque and patent in the falling light.
Feathering the currents, he lifts,
calling twice, this time deified.
Watching him go and turn
his plumage into night, I think
I aim myself for such
considered, cunning flight.

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Charles Darwin

process of artificial selection was somehow rapid and superficial, natural selection slow and deep. In fact infertility between emergent species will be selected, even if the geographical barrier between them is transient, for the two groups, having been freed from the averaging effect of sexual reproduction across their whole range, will have become better adapted to their new limited surroundings; and if contact is restored, the resultant mongrels, ill-adapted to either ecological niche, are likely to become protein for the crows.

This theoretical failure later left Darwin dismally free to adopt an extreme concept of a species - Lamarck's view of fifty years earlier - that it was a "term... arbitrarily given for individuals closely resembling each other", a view which ignores the real reproductive discontinuity between species in the wild. But the rest of his own evidence supported him to the full: the geological record might well have stopped in 4004 at October 23 at nine o'clock in the morning, the date of creation as calculated from Genesis, but actually it declined the opportunity. The newly discovered, human time-scale of the rocks not only provided ample ages for the slow evolution of creatures as complex as the elephant, with its generation span of thirty to sixty years, but it then continued downwards, layer upon geological layer, receding into ever darkening antiquities which finally rolled out and away altogether beyond the reach of the imagination.

Even granted the great age of the world, it would have sufficed, to disprove Darwin's hypothesis, to have shown that the fossil record was composed of the remains of animals identical to the perfectly designed individuals alive today; but the skeletal (and exoskeletal) organisms, in their ancestral graveyard, "arranged themselves in otherwise inexplicably graded progressions; in slowly changing shapes, traced in stone."

And as in time, so in space - there is hardly a climate or environment in the Old World that is not paralleled in the New, yet their living productions are dramatically different. Darwin predicted that species belonging to a particular group should be more unlike the closer they were, geographically, and so it has proved to be.

So much for the larger perspectives. For an exceptionally good explanation of the detailed structures of Darwin's work, and a real attempt to integrate the general thrust of his speculative intellect with his seemingly endless patience, his scholarly passion for minute calm observation and lovingly assembled, one turns to Wilma George's book. She has written, among other things, the best short account I know of Darwin's

extraordinary eight years of work, begun four years after writing his private pencil sketch of "my species theory" and two years after completing his 1844 *Essay*, (which contained all the major ideas and was in some ways more cogently argued than *The Origin of Species*), when, already master of his revolutionary new science, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the classification of the barnacle.

He was initially fascinated. It is true, by an odd burrowing barnacle which he discovered during the voyage of the Beagle; but it is also true that barnacles make clear fossils that can be picked out through the rock strata with relative ease. Here was a large experiment to put his theory to the test.

Lyell believed that all basic types of animals had been present since the original creation (mammals and birds were not found in the earlier strata simply because they were not as tough as shells) and that species and varieties had appeared and disappeared as the environment changed. But Darwin's gradually changing barnacles provided him with ample evidence of their evolution. Yet it was strange that the sessile barnacles (like the common acorn barnacle clamped around our coasts) which were common in the rock formations of the last sixty-five million years, the Tertiary or Cenozoic era, seemed to disappear in Secondary or Mesozoic era (an arbitrary mark on the geological clock sedimenting on minutes back to 245 million years). Such a gap did not fit Darwin's ideas, or Lyell's. Were the sessile barnacles created? Well, no. Darwin's perseverance was rewarded, and one day he received a drawing, amongst a mass of material from his barnacle-contributing correspondents, of a species from an old and rare rock stratum which proved to be an obvious ancestral link. He already knew more about gaps in the fossil record than his opponents ever would.

Aristotle's classification of living organisms was a ladder, the *scala naturae*, based on the differences between animals - whether or not they had red blood; for instance, Linnaeus decided upon an artificial classification in which convenience was the controlling principle, constant characters the guide, and the reproductive organs the identifying marks. Lamarck divided the animal kingdom into vertebrates and invertebrates, and many negative characters in his arrangements (worms, for example, metapneustic essences of animals and quaternary them). Into four separate acts of creation. But it was Darwin who actually discovered the natural system of classification, the pursuit of which so many natural historians had spent their lives

Dissecting, classifying, sorting through unnamed, exotic, vast encrustations of barnacles gathered in his study (in September 1854, the investigation complete, he sent 10,000 barnacles back to their owners). Darwin bought a new microscope to add to his crude, simple lenses from the Beagle and set to work at his round table and on the window ledge, surrounded by other pieces of equipment necessary to the struggle: his wall of books, his reading chair, his couch, his snuff-box, an elaborate filing system of wooden drawers, a wash-basin and lavatory behind a screen to rescue him from possible distractions lurking in the family corridors outside, and an ingenious placement of mirrors to identify visitors crunching up the drive.

The tiny "parasites" that cling inside the shells of some barnacles, he discovered, complete with minute antennae and genitalia, but without mouth or gut, were the males of the species. And there were also tiny males in some hermaphrodite barnacles. In fact the sexual arrangements of barnacles were quite excessively *outré* unless one thought in terms of a progression of species: from hermaphrodites, to hermaphrodites with complementary males, to separately sexed barnacles. Sex itself had been naturally selected, or so it would seem. But why? To provide the variations, the raw materials of change, on which natural selection could act. And what patterns did this huge and careful classificatory survey reveal? Certainly there were no archetypes to be found - an organ serving one function in one group would simply be modified to perform a different task in another group; there was no evidence of separate creations; and, although an assessment of similarities between animals was the obvious key to success, serial homologues, indicating the essence of a group or an animal - such as Goethe's extrapolation up the backbone to the skull - leading to his triumphant declaration, "Der Mensch ist ein nicht partikulär hilfreich. The pattern was a tree, irregularly branched, a coral of life. The classification was by descent with modification.

Darwin, in his search for the laws of inheritance, the secrets of variation, discovered much the same evolutionary sexual progression in orchids, for instance - *The Various Contrivances by which Orchids are Fertilised by Insects* was published in 1862 - and the same insistence on cross-fertilization. *Orchids pyramidalis*, one of his favourite flowers, growing abundantly at Down, astonished him with the complexity of its adaptations

for sexual reproduction: its bright purple colour attracted moths by day, its foxy smell brought moths at night, and an elaborate system of flowery trapdoors, petalled pathways and sticky discs ensured that each visitor left with a cargo of pollen as well as a draught of nectar.

But despite his persistent experiments, his voracious reading, his far-flung network of learned men and wise breeders with whom he exchanged letters, Darwin failed to grasp the principles of heredity, or to get wind of the few essential facts that would have pointed him along the right path. He thought that the actual amount of the male contribution to fertilization was important ("We must not overlook the effects of the unequal combination of characters derived from both parents.") Yet as early as 1830 Jean-Baptista Lamarck had watched down his microscope as one pollen grain put out a single pollen tube to grow down the style of an orchid and make contact with the egg cell; and in 1856 the fusion of a single pollen nucleus with a single egg nucleus had been observed; and in the same year Nathaniel Pringsheim had seen one spermatozoon enter one egg cell of the freshwater alga *Oedogonium*.

Darwin, however, still believed in the age-old theory of blending inheritance, the mixing of blood, the mingling of small particles or fluids. So, even had he seen them, he would probably have dismissed Mendel's elegant 1866 results from his pea-breeding experiments in the monastery garden at Brünn, demonstrating the hard, particulate nature of the hereditary factors and the simple mathematical ratios governing their distribution down the generations, as aberrant. He proposed, instead, his "provisional hypothesis of pangenesis" whereby tiny gemmules gathered in the sex cells from every organ of the body and were passed on to the offspring.

Worried, later, by Kelvin's residual heat calculations of the age of the sun which gave the earth too short a life-span for evolution by natural selection the physicists must be wrong, and predicted the discovery of "a new source of energy now unknown to us" - radioactivity. Darwin retreated to his grandfather's and to Lamarck's theoretical position, to a belief in the inherited effect of use and disuse, of habit, and to a declaration that "variability of every kind is directly or indirectly caused by changed conditions of life"; which, as Howard remarks, is "one of the few major generalisations that Darwin ventured upon which is now known to be categorically false."

He should have stuck to his original

insight as tenaciously as one of his own barnacles to a rock: modern genetics would have vindicated him. As Howard tells us, evolution by natural selection is now thought to be

a necessary property of matter organised in a certain kind of way. The famous double helix of DNA, solved by Watson and Crick in 1953, is a structure that can both carry hereditary information and replicate with extraordinary but not complete accuracy. It thus embodies in a pure chemical substance the three Darwinian conditions for evolution: heredity from the accuracy of self-replication, multiplication from the fact of self-replication, and variation from the rare inaccuracies of replication.

All organisms, moreover, from the primitive bacteria to man, use the same material to maintain the continuity of life, the same genetic code to translate hereditary information into an adaptive development process. Since the genetic code is arbitrary and, so far as is known, absolutely unconstrained by physical necessity to be precisely the way it is, the only reasonable explanation for this is that it has evolved only once. As Darwin himself remarked in 1871

If (and oh! what a big if!) we could conceive in some warm little pond, with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts, light, heat, electricity, etc. present, that a protein compound was chemically formed ready to undergo still more complex changes...

These are both excellent books, much more various than this exposition of their main theme has allowed me to indicate; they both deserve to become best sellers in their class. Jonathan Howard is to be formally congratulated; and Wilma George, when she returns from her latest intrusion into the domestic affairs of the night life of the Australian marsupial mouse, should be kidnapped from her Land Rover by some villainous academic publishers, given pre-publication access to the new collection of Darwin letters, immersed with several tons of boxed Darwin manuscripts in the Cambridge University Library, and only released when she has completed the big biography it is plainly her duty to write.

It remains to salute the real undercover hero of these pages, the lampshades, *Lingula*, still safe and warm in the foul mud where it has lain, without competitors of any kind, untroubled by the indignities of natural selection and, it must be said, doing very little, for five hundred million years.

Hunting the Highlands

Bruce Urquhart

ANTHONY ATHA (Editor)

A Scottish Naturalist: The Sketches and Notes of Charles St John 1809-1856

192pp. Deutsch. £10.95. 0 233 97390 7

It is doubtful whether Charles St John can properly be called either Scottish or a naturalist: though having escaped, at the age of twenty-four, from his job as a clerk at the Treasury, to a house in Lord Bellinghrope, he chose to live most of his life as a country gentleman. Fortunately his gifts included the ability to write well, honestly and with such humour that it is possible to accept him as a naturalist, albeit an amateur. In *Sutherland*, and later in *Morayshire* where he settled, his private income gave him the leisure to observe, identify and carefully record the game that he pursued as well as his 1809 - so seeing the dawn of modern physical science, St John was on the whole more susceptible to Isaac Newton and Gilbert White than to so many birds, suggests that he owned a library at least as good as Compton-Innes, Sheriff of Moray, who

became his Macenas.

The friendship began one windy day when Innes was "making out a bag of partridges" on the banks of the river Findhorn: he was searching in vain for two wounded birds when St John appeared out of the bushes with a large black poodle which promptly retrieved them. After this encounter they became frequent companions. St John's anecdotes so impressed Innes that he persuaded him to note them down and about a year later, over a shooting lunch, announced that John Murray had accepted St John's first collection, to be published as *Wild Sports and Natural History of the Sutherland Incorporating Field Notes of a Naturalist in two volumes*, and in 1863, seven years after St John's early death, *Natural History in Moray*, edited by Innes. In 1878 John Murray published the first illustrated edition of *Wild Sports* and the preface refers to no less than seven previous editions.

Anthony Atha has drawn from these books the text of *A Scottish Naturalist*. At the head of each chapter appear highly professional extracts from the second edition of the *Natural History of Moray* which establish perfectly the appropriateness of the title. More than clear his choice of a house in fertile Moray. St John's own spontaneous pen-and-ink drawings enliven the text on almost every page; his watercolours, some of which are reproduced

here, are charming though a little naive.

St John never attempted to disguise his sportsman's love-hate relationship with nature; to watch a hawk tear its live prey apart or an adder slowly engulf a struggling frog can make a gunshot seem benign. Though he relished shooting he was not a trophy hunter nor did he approve of the huge bags of organized shoots and their attendant publicity. His main pleasures were derived from working his dog along the banks of the Findhorn, over rough ground about the woods of Darnaway or from observing the waterfowl of Loch Spynie; pheasants came little into his journals though he lived in what Travelyan called "the era of the kept pheasant".

Understandably, Atha has chosen to omit gory accounts of deer stalking as well as one of the wanton killing of woodcock out of season. It is hard to see how anyone who has been close to that beautiful bird and watched it pick up and tuck its young between its thighs to carry it to safety can shoot at any time, but St John also shot the rare spotted woodpecker and the rose-coloured starling which may have been destined for the "bird stuffer" and subsequently the glass case. Few Scottish Victorian country houses were without a case or two as they were considered instructive for the children and less upsetting than keeping live birds in cages, which St John characteristically called "prisons" though he used them.

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WARREN DERRY (Editor)

The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney
Volume 9: Bath 1815-1817 - Letters 935-1085A
Volume 10: Bath 1817-1818 - Letters 1086-1179

1062pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford
University Press. £80 the set.
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In November 1815 General Alexandre D'Arbly and his wife Fanny took lodgings in Great Stanhope Street, Bath. It was the last marital home they were to share. They had returned from the Continent after Waterloo: Fanny had observed the battle from Brussels, while her husband stayed at his post at Trèves, unaware of the great events. The general had now been put on the *retrograde* list: he had been kicked on the leg by a horse while at Trèves, and the wound was slow to heal. Fanny herself had had a hoarse removed a few years earlier; both were now in their sixties and with the general's half-pay long in arrears they were by no means comfortably off. A brief stay in solid Rivers Street, up above the Circus, was enough to show them how expensive life in Bath could be. Without enthusiasm, Fanny sought out "comfortable & pleasant lodgings at a reduced price." It was thus they found themselves in Great Stanhope Street, "as it is called, not by any means, from being of a magnitude or magnificence to merit the epithet."

The house survives, three-storeyed, single-fronted, never quite a fashionable address. Even imposing Norfolk Crescent, round the corner, dwindled to a hilt because of the wartime slump in building. The D'Arblys occupied the first and second floors, living so far as possible at the back, where a fine view stretched out towards Somerset. Down the road lay New King Street, whose residents

had included Herschel as well as Richard Brinsley Sheridan and his father ("actor and orthopaedist", as the discreet plaque has it). Living at no. 17 when she arrived, was none other than Mrs Piozzi, widowed a second time and burdened with her own troubles. It was some time before the two women exchanged calls. Fanny went to a dingy pair of rooms where she found Mrs Piozzi "in mourning . . . stiff, silent, & with an air of petrifying coldness." The visitor even detected in her the attitudes of a "runk methodist". Later contacts produced more "unanimous chatter", but never any full restoration of the friendship destroyed (like so many others) in the aftermath of Mrs Thrale's marriage to Piozzi. Fanny's good relations with Queneau Thrale, now Lady Keith, were enough to confirm the breach. There are few hints of awareness in Fanny that the world had behaved cruelly towards Mrs Piozzi.

But her obsessions lay elsewhere, in her immediate family: above all, in the fortunes of her husband and son. Her three years in Bath embrace a long-running comedy, with her son evolving tragic episode which centred on the general, Alex, a rather young at Cambridge which was designed for those proceeding to a medical degree. But he was preoccupied, in a delicate way, with the mathematical tripos, and in the end (after a deeply tedious passage of academic legalism, which Fanny didn't grasp at all) he was obliged to forfeit the award. This put further strain on his parents' slender means. He had also had to migrate from Caius to Christ's - "Christ Church," his mother obstinately calls it. For the next two years, until his graduation as tenth Wrangler, his ordination and fellowship, Alex arrogated most of Fanny's time and nervous energy. Meanwhile, unknown to her, the general was dying.

Alex figures in her mind as a "giddy

pate", "too excentric [sic] Alex", one who must overcome "his terrible & gauche sauterie". In her letters she cries out, "If ever there was a *Tormentosa* [sic] in the world, surely it is my lot to be his mate!" The young man is discovered lounging upon the floor; he works hard in bursts, and then stops; "he is so sick when urged to a study that disgusts him, yet so eager & happy in application to what he likes." In other words, he is like all students who ever existed, but fiercely possessive and protective (and fiercely) parents can be forgiven for misreading the situation. Fanny constitutes herself his "flapper", and badgers him continually to abjure the new-fangled French mathematics not yet accepted at Cambridge. She writes hortatory verses: "If you work well a Wrangler you must be/And if you Divurge, or Choose - An Optimist. /So take your general is almost equally severe, though advising his son once to let up a grander tension les fibres de ton cerveau." In France he finds a prospective wife for the boy, but Fanny predictably replies that "our Alex is too unformed, too inexperienced, & too helpless to draw his Ticket in the great & eventful Lottery of Marriage, till his Character unfolds". Huffed that her husband should thus "enter into a child's *mon inspi*", she firmly resists the plan. Alex is not consulted. The general contents himself with the thought that the trend towards later marriages "remonte à une époque, qu'il serait facile de démontrer avoir été celle du relâchement des mœurs pures et domestiques de nos bons ayeux".

Poor Alex is obviously being set up for the role of Henry Crawford: "His mind, his principles, his Character All want forming & steady; for though he is a stranger to vice, he has no energy or exertion for active virtue. And he has a terrible secret, which I will blurt out initially: 'He owned that

***** had so imperious a power over his whole faculties & Being, that nothing weighed in his scale of affection once he was engaged." This disturbing vice, which occupies Fanny for several pages, is an addition to chess: finally Alex writes to his father, "Je renonce formellement et absolument aux échecs, je renonce à ce frivole amusement . . . qui m'a fait négliger si longtemps mes intérêts et mes devoirs." But he relapses: sent away from Cambridge acquaintances, such as the computer pioneer Charles Babbage, he is forbidden to attend a cricket match in order to work. Who should then arrive but Dr Thomas Bowdler, just about to bestow on a grateful world *The Family Shakespeare* and soon to start cleaning up Gibbon? Bowdler had been a chess freak and had achieved a draw against Philidor in a simultaneous exhibition. Naturally Alex persuades Bowdler (who has given up the game) to discuss knotty points of tactics. Fanny, who had not seen Bowdler for thirty years, was not amused.

Ifracombe marks a turning-point in this story. It rains for fourteen weeks; the place is no more than an incipient resort, Sanditon with a north wind and no amenities. Fanny has her famous adventure when stranded in a cove, with a dog, by the incoming tide. Having lost a favourite nephew earlier in the year, she now hears of the death of Madame de Staël, and so begins *la série noire*. After her return to Bath, her brother Charles had a stroke on Christmas Day 1817, and died three days later. Populistic and gouty, Charles had condescended to live too well, pursuing his moderate career as a classicist, collecting old newspapers, about their father's memorial in Westminster Abbey. All this time the general was in France, vainly pursuing his back-pay and his health. He returned a broken man, and now the tragic dénouement would unfold. On the day that Fanny learnt of Alex's success at Cambridge, which disproved all her malign forecasts, her husband made a note in his private diary, "ce jour vient de me dévoiler une terrible vérité".

Ever since the kick on his leg, he had been a semi-invalid, with an attack of hepatitis compounding his problems. He had been prescribed some exotic remedies, including opodeldoc and syrup of sassafras. Now a long-standing bowel disorder became acute; at first it was treated as a stricture, but it was evidently cancer of the rectum. Fanny called in the leading Bath physician William Tudor, later to treat Wordsworth; the apothecary "lost his air of satisfaction & complacency". There follows a tender and moving record of the general's last days; Fanny nurses him devotedly, writes down his

So, for the present, we leave Fanny bereaved and uncertain as she returns to London. It is an extraordinary thought that she still had over twenty years to go: a son, two sisters and another brother to outlive, as well as a nephew and niece. It was not till 1840 that her remains would be laid next to her son's, and near those of her husband: above them all, the still-nestle on Wolcott church proclaimed a classical heyday of Bath which Fanny, beset by family problems, had not been able to recapture.

Subtly social

Richard Brown

IGOR WEBB

From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution
219pp. Cornell University Press.
\$17.50.
0 8014 1392 3

You don't have to be a Marxist to discuss the relationship between literature and society, but it certainly helps. Marxists have a stable idea of what exactly a society is, and that idea can be used as a fixed point of reference to which literature may be related. This, as Igor Webb seems to argue, is the advantage that Georg Lukács has over Leslie Stephen. But Marxism traditionally gives rather a deadeningly stable definition of literature too; and so Webb identifies himself with Raymond Williams's well-known critique of the traditional Marxist idea of the relationship between art and economics in favour of an autonomous role.

From these beginnings, Webb attempts to show how the "structures of feeling" in Jane Austen, in the Brontë novels and in *Hard Times* are

conclusively and determinately, if not always apparently, related to the social changes of the Industrial Revolution. Novels are exposed as subtle forms of social history, as aspects of the "totality" of experience that industrial society represents. The argument ranges over the differing theories of value, both economic and moral, that the novelists betray in their work, and over the role of education and of social inferiors like Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park* and Jane in *Jane Eyre*. Some small issues get prominent treatment, such as where Charlotte Brontë researched the Luddite riots for *Shirley* and what Sir Thomas Bayntun was really doing when absent from Mansfield Park in Antigua. In a final chapter more general issues such as the nineteenth-century novelists' impulse towards individualism of character when faced with the shock and disorder of the crowd are treated; and Foucault's history of punishment and surveillance is invoked.

These are weighty issues, many of which are topical in academic discussions. But Webb is not always either as lucid or as convincing as he might be and his choice of novels is surely too narrow, too familiar and too dependent on the old-fashioned critical values for one to feel that his case has been conclusively established.

The Individual and his Times

Roy Fuller

I suppose I ought to start with my school days, spent mostly at private schools far less well equipped than those of any kind today. In the very early 1920s, when I was about the class to copy into notebooks lines of poetry that appealed to them, I was alarmed. There were no books of verse at home, and at school the only poetry I had access to was *Canto I* of Sir Walter Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which we were "doing" in class. I copied into my notebook a sententious verse that I recalled my grandmother had written in my autograph album, and the following line from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*: "O swiftly can speed my dapple-grey steed". Whether I ever added to this meagre anthology I do not recall.

I had read in the notes or (less likely) the teacher had expounded, that the movement of Scott's line imitated in its speed and undulation the movement of the horse. The aptness greatly appealed to me, and rightly so, for its power to embody such gimmicks is an indication of poetry, differentiating it from prose.

Later in my schooldays, though short-story writing was what I longed to succeed at, I came to write a poem or two myself, output increasing after I left school at sixteen to become a solicitor's articled clerk - a "trainee solicitor" as it is genteelly termed today. At the age of four or five I had become passionately devoted to reading, still am. Myself providing reading matter seemed at first a way to fame along an agreeable road, I hoped it might in the end be a full-time occupation, as it was for the literary giants of my boyhood, G. B. Shaw, H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett. In the result it remained for by far the greater part of my adult life a "spare-time" occupation. I always realized, of course, that my verse would never earn me a living, but it also turned out that my novels were too highbrow, or maybe just not good enough, to be popular.

It also turned out that my boyhood ended at the start of a world upheaval, which led to an upheaval in English writing, particularly the writing of poetry. The economic "bizzard" (as it was called) of 1929 and ensuing years produced not only mass unemployment but also the rise of Hitler, the spread of the barbarous and repressive phenomenon of fascism, the threat and finally the virtual certainty of a second world war. It cannot be said that before 1929 one lived in a just, prosperous and ordered England: I had arrived at school conscious of the injustices and inequalities in the distribution of money and privileges in society. But that had not affected the kind of poetry I wrote, which I suppose aimed at depicting, embodying, "beauty". I put the word in inverted commas not to denigrate it (for undoubtedly concepts of the beautiful must enter into all creative activity) but to indicate the vagueness of my endeavour. All my poems of those days are fortunately lost, but some dealt with the beauty of the beloved, few with that of nature, and I guess most of them would try to use "beautiful" words in a "beautiful" way.

By 1932 my socialism had become "scientific socialism", that is Marxist. I believed that the wrong in society could be righted only through social revolution; that the threat of war could be removed only by the victory of the international working class; and that effective opposition to the Nazi and other fascist movements would only effectively come from radical left-wing parties, or under their leadership. By that date the poets W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender and C. Day Lewis had published their early books, all containing verse concerned with social issues and political beliefs. One began to feel oneself a part of a new movement in literature, sharing a feeling echoed in the names of periodicals and anthologies of the time - *New Signatures*, *New Writing*, *New Country*, *New Verse*.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, / But to be young was very heaven" - did one feel in those very early years of the 1930s as Wordsworth about the French Revolution? Not at all. Almost from the start there were difficulties and unhappiness for the contemplative intellectual, which, after all, is what a poet is. In my own case I can deal quite simply with what, for others, became an issue of great moment and much spilt ink. The belief in Marxism, with the usual corollary belief in the virtue of the existence and even all the actions of the Soviet Union, seemed to some a matter of faith. On losing that faith they felt deeply guilty, perhaps, if they moved instead into religious beliefs. After the war, a collection of essays about this loss of faith in communism was indeed given the title *The God That Failed*. My own scepticism was slow-developing, not accompanied by any dramatic withdrawal from party politics, not turning into religiosity. I grew to be ambivalent about the goodness of mankind in the mass, and about state ownership and other things underlying socialism. I would guess that my attitude at the time of Stalin's death is quite well shown by my poem "Death of a Dictator": maybe I should by then have been more unconditionally anti-Stalinist, but the sonnet hints at the far from straightforward feelings of the past.

A more lasting source of unease was the developing sense that, almost by definition, the "contemplative intellectual" was temperamentally and otherwise unfitted for political life and action. This may seem more trivial than the question of belief, and so indeed it is. Yet it exercised my mind both before and after the war, exercises it still to some extent, for the evils of the age go on presenting themselves as conquerable, at all, only by active steps to be taken by each individual - or, at any rate, as so pervasive and fundamental as to make taking no steps a matter of self-reproach. In my early days, when the new-found dogmas of scientific socialism seemed a complete answer to the world's ills, I despised any viewpoint short of utter Marxist belief, and committed political action on behalf of the working class. Before the war, Stephen Spender (whose poetry I much admired) advanced the idea that a poet might usefully and more honestly write from a standpoint of weakness - write out of his doubts about dogma, his flinching from action, his scruples about ruthlessness - but in those days I would have called this bourgeois softness, as would many young dogmatists still. Yet it may be said that in the end I wrote almost all my poetry from that standpoint or a similar one.

I excluded all those "dogmatic" poems, as too unsatisfactory, from my first collection of verse, *Poems*, which came out in 1939. If looked at, *Poems* would show the problems of pretty well hidden behind masks of poetic style and poetic forms. The book is a suitable reminder to us to bear in mind, when talking about the subject, that every poet cuts into English literature, as it were, at a certain point in the game, when all sorts of what may be called purely literary preoccupations exist. How can I get away from the heroic couplet? Some young poet might have asked himself in the early eighteenth century. In the early twentieth century plenty of poets decided to get away from the iambic pentameter. There is much - most - to poetry that is not ideology. Similarly it should be remembered that the "I" of the poem is not necessarily the poet himself, even when it seems to be. The poet would be as intolerable an egotist if he did not feel that as a poet he wore a mask that more often than not resembles other men. I think that is why in his verse he can be free with the details of his personal life - give himself away as a lesson, not a confession.

The earliest poems in this selection are from the war years. Being called

up into the Royal Navy in 1941 made irrelevant for the time being the division between the withdrawn poet and the wicked world, the privileged solicitor and the under-privileged working man. It came to me quite soon that the poems I hoped to write about being in the armed forces should be relatively simple. Like Wilfred Owen in the First World War, I did not

could not remain for ever, or without guilt. But another poem of the same period, "Florestan to Leonora", shows how far I had come from the strict ideology of the early 1930s. Florestan is haunted at the idea of being freed into a just and happy world, having grown used to, been stimulated by, a world of dictatorial oppression, complicated art, and un-

long fingernails in "Pictures of Winter" (the latter possibly a hangover from my boyhood reading of the Dr Fu Manchu stories).

The admission by the poet, or the "I" of a poem, of doubts and ambivalences and so forth, is not always carried on in such solemn terms as those of Beethoven's opera or Shakespeare's Roman tragedy. The ironies of human existence extend to politics and sociology, nominally serious matters. In "Translation", the anti-radical viewpoint is exaggerated so as to ram the points home and provide amusement - though it may be hazardous that the author in real life sometimes had such thoughts himself. Again, in "Chimisme", the opposition between the characters of poet and man of business existing in the same human envelope, is put in a way that will divert, perhaps slightly shock, the reader: the actual possessor of such characters may be imagined to regard and combine them in a deeper and more subtle way.

Thinking about the poet's "masks", which may be found throughout my work (even the "elderly man" of later poems cannot be guaranteed to be the poet himself, though in this case I feel there is an obligation on the poet not to over-act!), the extreme case may be thought to be the piece where the "I" is a parasite of the pig ("Autobiography of a Lungworm").

The parallels between the decline of the Roman Empire and of institutions (including the British Empire) in the modern age, have encouraged me to don antique masks. This is especially true of "On the Mountain", where the Emperor Constantine's Rome has a distinctly up-to-date look, and the analogy between primitive Christianity and modern communism is exploited.

Soon after the war, the opposition between Russia and the West brought the threat of a new war, with a horrifying ingredient added - the atom bomb, which had already been senselessly dropped. As it turned out, the peace was prolonged, but I have expressed the fear of nuclear conflict in many post-war poems, perhaps too many, for the horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki haunts me, and I am therefore apt to bring the business into poems which strictly do not demand it. It may be thought the last one and a half lines of "An English Summer" is such a case. Many of the sensations of living in these times are put in concentrated form in the separate quatrains of "Confrontation Off Korea, 1968", which was an actual historic incident that for some days seemed likely to bring about open hostilities between East and West.

The prolonged peace, and my own living into old age and going on writing, meant that my poetry has



Roy Fuller in 1941.

want, as he said, "to write anything to which a soldier would say No Comprois". "Waiting To Be Drafted" is a good example - even the form is simple, just the short last lines of the stanzas with the same rhyme. "YMCA Writing Room" is simple, too, especially if compared with many things in *Poems*, though Owen's soldier might have to ponder more. For instance, the "blues and reds of the map are 'dangerous' because blue indicates sea, dangerous in wartime, and red the British Empire (it existed then), empire being a phenomenon a socialist would consider as making for war.

I had a lucky war, and in 1946 returned to my pre-call-up position as a solicitor with a large building society, having published two collections of poetry during the war.

I will now enlarge on what I said earlier about the notion of writing poetry frankly from a position of weakness. I hope it would be too limiting to say that all my poetry since the war shows up the writer as an "ineffectual angel" (Matthew Arnold's phrase for Shelley), because it does take account of the ironies of the position, and does not pretend to have engagements with the world that its author lacks. "The Ides of March" perhaps puts the business in its starkest terms. Brutus, not quite the historical or Shakespearean Brutus, is presented as a previously uncommitted man about to throw in his lot with a terrorist faction. Contrary to what might be imagined, using a literary-historical character rather than making the "I" of the poem more personal, enables the subject to be treated with a good deal of enriching freedom. For instance, the poem refers to the legend that Brutus was Caesar's natural son, and so is brought in obliquely the Freudian idea of the Oedipus Complex: the repressed wish of a son to kill his rival the father.

At this time, the mid-1950s, the personification so appealed to me that I called the collection in which "The Ides of March" appeared *Brutus the Oedipus*. The title was meant to indicate that in a sense all the poems were set in a place where the love for wife and children, and the wish to create, were threatened by tyrants, injustice - and the wrings of conspirators. In such a place one

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commentary

Mother, marriage and mortification

Patricia Craig

Frost in May
BBC TV

The first part of Antonia White's tetralogy was published in 1933, and the rest between 1950 and 1954. The earliest novel, *Frost in May*, is very much better than the others: it has sharpness, clarity, strength of feeling and consistency of tone to its credit. Elizabeth Bowen called it a classic school story and also a work of art, which seems a just assessment. It is a carefully controlled exercise in the depiction of disenchantment.

Nanda Grey, as its heroine is called, is a pupil, between the ages of nine and fourteen, at the Convent of the Five Wounds at Lippington. The daughter of a convert, Nanda takes with enthusiasm to her new religion and the exigent schooling that accompanies it. She is hardly less susceptible than her father, whom she always wishes to please, to the rather lurid glamour attaching to *fin de siècle* Catholicism (the year of Nanda's arrival at the convent is 1908). Catholic habits of thought and behaviour soon come naturally to her; she learns to examine her conscience carefully before going to sleep, and to lie flat on her back with arms crossed neatly over her chest. This, she is told, is the posture in which our dear Lord expects to find Catholics whom he calls to himself suddenly in the night.

The strictest standards of piety and self-abnegation, Nanda gradually finds, go hand in hand with a capacity for moral riling on the part of the nuns, and a rather daunting snobbery: the daughters of grand European families are allowed more leeway than anyone else. The school's declared objective is to break the will of each pupil, especially the intelligent, recalcitrant, among whom Nanda is numbered. Eventually finds herself, in order to reset it "in God's own way". There are, you soon realize, extremely disturbing undercurrents to Lippington's idealization of order and sanctity.

All this transfers readily to the screen, even if a little of the classic detachment and austerity of the original has had to be jettisoned. The schoolgirls - including the two versions of Nanda as a nine-year-old and an adolescent - are charming, the nuns effectively insufferable, the atmosphere repressive and at the same time heady. The girls are exhorted to stoic virtues for themselves in heaven by performing acts of penance on earth - eating a piece of bread that has fallen, "just-side downwards, on a gravel path" is one example. Mortification of the senses looms overwhelmingly in the traditional Catholic upbringing.

The first play in the four-part series ends, like the novel, with Nanda's expulsion and consequent repudiation by her exalting father, who has no more sense of absurdity, or understanding of the fancies and excitements of adolescence, than Lippington's repellent headmistress (excellently played by Elizabeth Spriggs). Nanda, in her spare time, has been writing a diary, every bit as poignant as Daisy Ashford's, the manuscript of which falls into Mother Radcliffe's casting hands. The girl's parents are sent for, Nanda's father compares her daughter's mind to a sink of filth and impurity.

If *Frost in May* is slightly incapacitated for television by being somewhat short on action (it has theme rather than plot, and strong implications rather than narrative impetus), its sequel's cause other, and graver, problems for the adaptor. They cram in as much lush drama as they possibly can. Antonia White apparently came to consider her first novel too overtly autobiographical to count as satisfactory fiction; and in *The Last Traveller* (1920) she attempts to give a more elaborate shape to her early experiences, changing her heroine's name to Clara. Batchelor, altering the angle of vision, to

accommodate viewpoints other than Clara's, and introducing innumerable flowery touches. The effect is disastrous. It is almost, at times, as if the author has modelled her style on the problem page of *Home Chat*.

In Alan Seymour's adaptation, we see Clara (now played by Janet Maw) being girlish all over the place: at the tea-table, at the opera, on the Downs. She positively wallows in girlhood and the romantic feelings it generates. The work of Francis Thompson strikes a chord in her. Meanwhile, her mother, Isabel (Elizabeth Shepherd), who comes to the fore in the second play, is indulging in a chaotic but whole-hearted flirtation of her own, which makes her behave like a character from *The Beloved Vagabond* or something similar. She is all affected vagueness and picturesque renunciation. Clara's schoolmaster father (John Carson), too, is often emotional in his own pent-up, fated way.

The troubles of this overwrought little family come to a head when a boy in Clara's charge (she is now employed as a governess in an upper-class Catholic home) is killed in an accident. The death of Charles Cresswell is the severest of the emotional blows the author has in store for her heroine, but not the most personal. Clara's singular misfortunes, indeed, might seem to determine the drift of the books: to make us feel that those subjected to the rigours of convent boarding-school life are in some way disabled and unfitted for ordinary living. Against this reading, however, is the deforming sentimentality about Catholicism that infects the narrative. The Church is more a solace than a scourge. Even the disagreeable Mother Superior of *Frost in May* is softening in the author's view: "my dear, you don't seem happy. Is there anything I can do or say that might help?" she asks Clara, back at Lippington on a visit.

The Sugar House (1952) regains a little of the astringent quality of the first book, but it still contains scenes and incidents of an excruciating fatuousness (the episode near the beginning, when the actor Stephen Tye is tenderly rejecting love-smitten Clara, is one of these). The dramatization has two advantages over the novel: it cuts out many of the spiritual digressions and allusions, which by now seem almost perfunctory; and it gives the rather unworldly part of Archie Hughes-Follett, Clara's impotent, drunken, schoolboyish husband, to an actor (Daniel Day-Lewis) who makes something cogent and coherent of it. This foolishly marriage is eventually annulled on the grounds of non-consummation; and, in *Beyond the Glass* (1954) we find Clara submitting ungraciously to lawyers' examinations, and emerging from the court doctor's surgery with the damning phrase "virgo intacta" ringing in her ears.

If the third play in the television series seems on the whole less vivid than the second, this is partly due to its pressing theme - sexual impotence and its effect on a Catholic marriage. The final episode, however (*Beyond the Glass*), deals with a subject of even greater consequence: madness, and the treatment of female lunatics while reverting to an intolerably romantic mood. Happiness - in the form of love affair so idyllic that it produces instant telepathic communication - unbalances poor Clara after so much of filth and impurity.

To celebrate the centenary of the birth of Zoltan Kodály the Fourth Buxton Festival (July 24-August 18) has as its main theme the work and philosophy of Kodály and Hungarian artistic traditions. The centenary of Kodály will be the British premiere of the festival opera *The Adventurers of Kodály* (1926). In September the 20th International Music Competition in Budapest has been designated the Kodály-Erkel Singing Competition. In October and November an exhibition of Kodály's life will be held at the Pompidou Centre, Paris; and on December 15th Antal Dorati will conduct a 100th Birthday Concert in the Royal Festival Hall.

stress. With the revival of her spirits, girlishness overtakes her again, but now it carries an hysterical undertone. The part, at this stage, all wild impulsive gestures and rapt looks, requires a measure of overacting. Janet Maw performs impeccably, in accordance with the script, but she can do nothing to make Clara's pre-maniacal behaviour seem anything but tiresome. You are aware of exaggerated feeling rather than genuine impending breakdown. Even the allusion to the far side of the looking-glass (surely something of a cliché even in 1954) seems far too facile a rationalization of madness.

Alan Seymour shows an admirable reluctance to tamper with the idioms and conversational mannerisms of the era, as Antonia White remembered them; this pays off as far as the overall style of his adaptation is concerned. But it means that the more banal moments of the novel are dismayingly recreated.

Less sex than sorcery

Michael Tanner

Armidé
Christ Church, Spitalfields

Every serious opera-lover wants *Armidé* to be a success. It has, like Gluck's other major works, none of the qualities that give opera a bad name and many of those that should give it a good one. But it seems to need propaganda work. The programme-book for Wolf Siegfried Wagner's production at Christ Church contains no less than seven essays, explaining and attempting to justify the work from a variety of points of view. Some of the claims made are absurd. Jeremy Hayes tells us that "Armidé's declarations of love in Act V scene 1 are as ardent and passionate as any musical love scene which has been written up to that time." Has he heard *L'incoronazione di Poppea*? Indeed, one of the chief faults with a work that is intermittently magnificent is that the expression of the erotic is simply not within Gluck's range.

Given that, as Bernard Williams argues in his short and illuminating piece, *Armidé* the sorceress is closer to Dido than she is to Cleopatra, it is important to notice what Gluck's range of expression is. None of the terms that inevitably suggest themselves - noble, grave, simple, sublime, resolute, innocent - hold out much promise for the depiction of a complex series of psychological developments of an erotic kind. The nearest that Gluck can approach that is the idyllic, which he does successfully in the scene in which Renard, the Aeneas-like hero, is wooed into magic slumber in Armidé's garden. But the trouble is that in the first place because he is so totally wooden - a cardboard - a figure, and one wants to find out how Armidé is getting on; and secondly, the apparent post-coital languor is actually not consequent on coitus, but on reclining in a restful landscape. And when Gluck produces tender music it is, again in the context, a generalized relaxation from the predominant fierceness of the work, and with no evident amorous intent.

Gluck's idiom is, famously, a rather generalized one, as everyone who has argued about the lamenting nature of "Chœur sans paroles" or "L'opéra" must recognize. In order to find out what his more precise expressive intentions are, otherwise the effect is of the monotonous sublime. Inventive, vigorous and grand, Gluck's music easily induces a state of mind in which, while one is not bored, one is nonetheless waiting for something strikingly different to happen. Unfortunately, the resonant acoustic of Christ Church surrounds every word with just enough of a halo to render it intelligible, and the strain of trying



"The Punch and Judy Show in a Nunnery" by Gian Domenico Tiepolo, from the exhibition of Old Master Drawings at Colnaghi and Co until July 10.

to catch them is exhausting and defeating.

That powerful obstacle to the minute following of the work granted, one has to rely on one's knowledge of the plot and the musico-dramatic power of the performance. Though only Armidé really matters, this is no problem, since her role is a vast one, and the character is undoubtedly one of the most intriguing in opera. (It is no surprise that she appealed so strongly to Berlioz and Wagner.) As Patricia Howard writes in the June number of *Opera*, "For Quinault [the librettist] to be in love was always to be enslaved."

The theme of *Armidé* is the essentially self-defeating nature of love. . . . Is Renard any more manipulated by Armidé (as sorceress) than Armidé by her own emotions? In that sense, it hardly matters that Renard and everyone else are nugatory; on the other hand, they unfortunately all have music in keeping with their lack of dramatic existence, and when Armidé is absent one longs for her return. And over and over again, Gluck rises to the only element in the subject that really engages him. The portrayal of Armidé first as malignant victim, then as

fascinated by Renard's indifference to her, and then as unwilling prey to her growing love for him, is brilliantly done. Only the scene where she kneels over him while he is asleep, and finds herself unable to plunge in the dagger, evokes anachronistic but relevant memories of Norma, Medea, and even Isolde, and shows how inadequate Gluck is in the depiction of complex psychological states, as opposed to rapidly successive ones. Armidé's supreme moments are at the end of Act III, where Gluck adds to Quinault's original four heart-breaking lines of his own, in which Armidé calls on "Amour" to calm her - exactly the reverse of what Love can ever do - and abandons herself to her passion; and her final Immolation Scene, in which she transcends herself in agonized grief and rage, and calls down the palace to bury her and her love for ever. Gluck is transcendent here too, achieving the only music in the whole work that equals his towering masterpiece *Iphigénie en Tauride*.

Appropriately for this Valkyrian enterprise, Felicity Palmer in this production looks like an especially butch member of that gaggle - Gertrude, perhaps. But mainly she is disabled by her ludicrous costumes. In the first three acts, a turban and task-force gear, complete with webbing belt and bleached army boots, in the last two a remarkably sexual outfit - perhaps to signalize the impossibility of knowing what would turn the wholly impassive Renard on. Neither she nor anyone else - least of all Gluck - is helped by Wolf Siegfried Wagner's production. The set is a wall of nine adjacent doors through which, during the admittedly tedious overture (borrowed, like so much else in this work, from a previous opera), Armidé's coy assistants pop like hyperactive Susannas, or figures in a

sub-Feydeau farce. The figure of Hatred is notably unimpressive, her fury seeming to be directed - and with good cause - against a peculiarly recalcitrant and ever-enlarging duet which she has to fight her way out of in order to sing. All too much of Wagner's production strikes me as a parody of some of his father's more grotesque failures; the senseless all-pervading whiteness, of both sets and costumes; the over-formalization of what is already dangerously formal; and above all, and related to that, the draining away of individuality where it is most urgently required.

The musical standard is high. Richard Wilcox's conducting is consistently lively while being sensitive to nuance, and there is an excellent balance between the individual voices (though not the chorus, relegated to the pit) and the orchestra. Raimund Herfex is impressive as he always is. Felicity Palmer flings herself into the part with such abandon that it seems ungrateful to complain of her unrelenting fierceness of tone, the acid Nilsson-like edge to her voice, and her air of petulance rather than grandeur in rage, love or distraction. For a complete realization of the part there must needs be a Leïder, a Callas (she, alas, only sang Rossini's version of the drama) or a Varnay, with their capacity for unlimited varieties of inflection. But in the last ten minutes, with no help whatever from the production, everything comes together in a vindication of Gluck's greatness and an uninhibited expression of the destructive force of love. *Armidé* is a fine opera, even if not a neglected masterpiece - and anyway, why call it that, when those words are now universally recognized as euphemistic for "tedious but historically important"?

Outside humanity

Helen McNeill

The German Sisters
Academy One Cinema

Margarete von Trotta's German tragedy is based on the history of journalist Christiane Ensslin's attempts to uncover the facts about the death of her terrorist sister Gudrun. The elder sister, renamed Juliane, is our narrator, and had been a girl rebel in the 1950s. Her younger sister Marianne had been pliant, seductive, dangerously receptive to their pastor father's Lutheran message of inescapable human depravity. The girls' childhood is revealed only gradually, counterpointed with the adult sisters' reversed roles. Juliane has grown up to be a liberal feminist journalist, slightly exploited by her equally feminist editor. But Marianne has become a terrorist: strong-willed, violent and imperiously demanding, she lives on the run. When she is captured she is subjected to sensory deprivation and dies, very likely murdered by her jailers.

The German Sisters begins in an atmosphere of curiosity and fear, with scenes of drained vitality colour. Sad-faced, long-haired Juliane (beautifully acted by Jutta Lampe) seems to represent decent, essentially private humanity trying to resist incursions from the destructive external world of history. But as von Trotta's script almost too relentlessly shows, the personal is political. One day Juliane thinks up just the right caption to go with some photos of Nazi mothers: "It is the mother who causes the most suffering; it is she who suffers most."

Von Trotta clearly sees women as fully historically answerable for all their evasions and actions. Marianne dies for her sins of commission. Even though we know it was she who as a child had vomited when forced to view scenes of Nazi atrocities, she is told by her sister when in prison that if she had been ten years older she would have been a Nazi. At this the neo-fascist waitress gives a little tight smile of sadistic satisfaction. History is unclear; the terrorist falls victim to those who think like her, in absolutes.

Meanwhile in her way Juliane pays with her life for her sins of omission. When Juliane declares early in the film that she is "too cowardly or too sensible" to have been a terrorist, she demonstrates a wilful political inactivity. *The German Sisters* climaxes with shattering images of Juliane's wild grief at her sister's death. Looking into the open coffin at her sister's gruesomely dead face, Juliane makes an association with concentration camp corpses which she and von Trotta no longer need to emphasize by flashback. Soon after, she decides to bring up Marianne's orphaned and persecuted

child although she had earlier rejected this responsibility. She also plans to devote the foreseeable future to investigating her sister's death and rehabilitating her memory. The sibling rivalry has ended with complete domination by Marianne. Like a demon who is also one's dearest flesh and blood, she takes over her humanist sister. It is the story of Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus appropriately transformed to women.

Although Juliane is the character with whom the audience is expected to identify, much of the film's message of inescapable responsibility comes across through the way Juliane's narrative gradually escapes from her control. Honesty and empathy are apparently inadequate tools for confrontation with an unresolved history. For the woman, love is the agency for both reward and punishment. When Juliane accepts the care of her orphaned nephew, she has symbolically redeemed her debt to the future and committed herself through love to finding a richer model for life than the hellfire preached by her father. This is not, however, enough. Through her passivity, Juliane has been absorbed into her sister's life. She has permitted herself to be caught in the specifically German trap of adoration of sheer will, whatever its aim.

But *The German Sisters* is no mere feminist footnote to a larger debate. Von Trotta is criticizing liberalism, the terrorist ethos and traditional film narrative by the same structural means. Marianne, who lives outside humanity as well as in human experience of history, all the turning points of *The German Sisters* occur off-stage, where ordinary people can't do anything about them. We learn of the suicide of Marianne's ex-husband, and of her arrest and death, only through conversation.

Most significantly, we never see and are never told just what constituted Marianne's terrorist activity. By keeping us in ignorance of Marianne's crimes, von Trotta personalizes our sympathies so that we are made even softer than Juliane. Such mystery increases Marianne's mythological stature, making her the archetype of the terrorist. Traditionally the mystery of woman has been part of cinematic glamour and seduction. Von Trotta rehearses this mystery and quite unmistakably sets about placing her audience in a position of weakness in relation to Marianne. At the same time the narrative presses towards encountering "damned ideas" so that the German past will not be repeated. *The German Sisters* has no heroes, and both its heroines disqualify themselves as bearers of belief. Glamorous mystery is a temptation of the medium which von Trotta examines and, I think, condemns. She does not, however, offer another solution.

The last time Marianne and Juliane see each other alive, through a wire-lined window, their faces are superimposed; this is in fact the moment when Marianne's spirit enters Juliane, though Juliane doesn't realize it. Formally the scene is a homage to the famous moment in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* when the faces and personalities of the nurse Alma and the actress Elisabet merge. Elisabet has decided to be silent since this is the only appropriate response to an age of absurdity. In *The German Sisters* a questioning silence and Nicholas Economou's sombre music often convey a greater depth of feeling than the dialogue, which tends to be too explicitly analytical. *Persona*, however, chronicled a retreat from a meaningless world. *The German Sisters* is about a richer, and more enduring issue, the impossibility of retreat from love and history.

"The Thackeray Silent Film Season" will be part of the London Film Festival this November. The programmes will be *Flesh and the Devil* (1926), King Vidor's *Show People* (1928), and previously unseen Chaplin shorts. All will have the orchestral accompaniment composed and conducted by Carl Davis.

Rich irreverence

Ronald Hayman

Theaterrefren
Berlin

In 1956, during a rehearsal of *Galileo* at the Berliner Ensemble, when one of the actors was becoming exorbitantly heroic, Brecht encouraged him. "Yes, the only reason he can play Schiller here is that it's no such thing. You can't be so ironical with Schiller as you can with me."

Today you can. There are actors who can't, but they get visibly car-sick in productions souped up with alienation effects, while fashionable directors undertake each other in calculated displays of irreverence towards the classics. At this year's Berlin Theaterrefren the company from Cologne staged Büchner's *Leonce und Lena* in a circus tent with a love scene played on a swing in a production that involved balloons and the distribution of boiled sweets to the audience. In the Bochum company's version of Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* the cigar-smoking sultan and his slinky sister recline in deck-chairs, while a cut-out giraffe poses in the background against a palm-tree which can retract its leaves to disappear through a trap-door.

This year four Berlin productions were among the ten selected by the jury. In Kleist's blank-verse *Penthesilea* the Greeks are dressed like Prussian cadets during the reign of Frederick the Great, and the Amazon queen brings Achilles's dismembered body on stage in three blood-soaked suitcases. In the Volksbühne's *Faust* (Part One) a seventy-seven-year-old actor is cast opposite a Gretchen of sixteen, with the text cut to little more than two hours and further cuts effectively introduced by inaudibility.

Usually, though, the dramaturgical surgery is less drastic and more judicious. In fact most of the irreverence reasserts the value of the text. At the beginning of the 1920s, when Brecht was working as a theatre critic, it wasn't the fault of Büchner or Kleist that neither the old directors nor the most radical of the young could have cleansed the bloodstream of German acting from the rhetoric that was poisoning it. Today, West German actors seem to be not only better than their colleagues in East Berlin but more Brechtian; and so do directors.

Nor have dramaturges ever been more important. The superiority of Peter Stein's *Orestes* to Peter Hall's begins in the superiority of Stein's text, which is in prose, and geared both to preserve contradictory tendencies in the original Greek and to translate the dynamic of the dialogue into stage movement. Stein has obviously worked closely, intensively and committedly with his two dramaturgical collaborators. It is relatively easy in the German theatre for a dramaturge to become a director, and Ernst Wendt, formerly a dramaturge in Berlin's Schiller-Theater, is now directing at the Munich Kammertheater, where he staged the *Torquato Tasso* which was seen in this year's Theaterrefren. Puristically straight-forward, deliberately statuesque and too often static, it seems almost obstreperous in its refusal to be irreverent.

The most impressive dramaturgical work in this year's Theaterrefren was the collaboration of director Hans Neuenfels with Peter Rüdel on *Penthesilea*. They eliminate most of the archaisms, making extensive cuts, and interpolating some of Kleist's manuscript alterations to a copyist's manuscript of the first draft, while the focus of the play is cleverly shifted away from the battlefield, not only making it unnecessary to bring horses on stage, but pushing the sex war more clearly into the foreground.

Written in 1807, the year after Napoleon's entry into Berlin and three years before Kleist wrote *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, *Penthesilea* was rejected by Goethe when he submitted it for production at Weimar, and it was not staged until 1876.

Reversing the post-Homeric legend, the play presents an Amazon who not only sets her dogs on Achilles, her lover, but sinks her teeth into his flesh after he has challenged her to battle. His intention was to surrender to her, and he comes into the field unarmed, but she mistakes devotion for contempt. The death wish that drove Kleist to suicide makes its theatrical debut in the woman's murderous rage. Neuenfels gives the play all the urgency it needs, while directing his wife, Elisabeth Trissenaar, in a performance which makes her ferocity seem to proceed as much from absent-mindedness as from madness.

Leonce und Lena was written in 1836 the year before Büchner died at the age of twenty-three. Contemptuous towards Schiller and classical idealism, he tried to evoke reality by goading styles into jumping at each other's throats, and Jürgen Fimm's circus-tent production modules appropriately between tenderness and ribaldry, subtlety and coarse satire, fairy tale and scatological folk comedy. In the kingdoms of Popo and Pipi the prince and the princess both rebel against the authoritarianism that sentences them to marry, but when they meet at night, without discovering each other's identity, they fall in love. She rejects the suicide pact he proposes, but they get married by mistake when they both turn up in disguise at the royal wedding and agree to stand in for the prince and princess who have apparently failed to materialize.

A lifesize papier mâché Lessing is the privileged spectator at Claus Peymann's production of *Nathan der Weise*, sitting at the head of the pier-like wooden ramp which projects over the stalls from the centre of the bright, white, bare-walled stage, while the line of neon strips which borders the pier continues on to the stage. From Lessing's outstretched right arm, which still has a pen in its hand, clothes and flesh have been stripped away to expose the arteries, and flesh has been torn away around the heart from which he writes. Arresting though it is, the figure is functional until the end of the play, when the Jew, aligning himself with his creator, recognizes that he is excluded from the happy ending. The sultan, the sister, the tempter and the adoptive daughter are the only beneficiaries of the Jew's wisdom and Lessing's plotting.

Claus Peymann's production is rich in resonances, and most of them are felicitous; there are several clever *coups de théâtre*, as when flames burst out on stage, forming a narrow square around the chair in which the daughter is sitting, and Peymann has wittily breathed lively new ironies into classic which is over-familiar to German audiences.

One of the Theaterrefren's biggest surprises was a staging of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the novel which refrigues *Waiting for Godot*, being written almost entirely in dialogue, centring on a journey undertaken by two men with more interest in departing than in arriving somewhere else. Peter Fitz and Otto Sander present the piece straight forwardly, more as a reading than as a dramatization, but they achieve an authentically Beckettian atmosphere from the early moment of performing a slow, silent, circular dance, clutching each other and an open umbrella. After the interval they reappear wearing identical white wigs and sitting at a table in the same pose to perform Beckett's fifteen-minute play *Ohio Impromptu*, a reductionist but highly theatrical statement about the impossibility of saying anything when it is equally impossible not to say anything. The listener can only rap imperiously on the table. The reader, who has been obeying every summons to repeat or to resume, comes to the end of the book. "Nothing more remains to be said." Each element in the production - the listener's silence, the reader's expressionless voice, the dejected postures and expressionless faces of both - contributes to what Beckett has called "the expression that there is nothing to express."

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The Greeks

Kenneth Dover

In this book, as in his BBC television series of the same title, Sir Kenneth examines the Greek approach to history, poetry, art, and philosophy, showing not only that their contribution left its mark for ever on these fields of human endeavour, but also that their legacy is still vital and fundamental to the contemporary world. Illustrated £3.50 Oxford Paperbacks

Texts from Hellenistic Babylonia in the Ashmolean Museum

Edited by Gilbert J.P. McEwan

The documents here published illustrate aspects of the social, political, and economic life of the members of the Mesopotamian temple communities. The texts are presented in autograph copies and are provided with indices, a descriptive catalogue, and a description of the seal impressions. £20 Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts

Discoveries in the Judean Desert Volume VII

Qumran Grotte 4, III Abbe Maurice Baillet

This volume continues the publication of the fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls held in the Rockefeller (formerly Palestine Archaeological) Museum in Jerusalem. It contains fragments 482-520 from Qumran Cave 4, which consist mainly of liturgical texts but include also some apocryphal fragments and some fragments of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness. Illustrated £80.

Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire

AD 312-480 Edward David Hunt

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a subject of perennial interest to all concerned with Christianity and its influence upon society, and in this wide-ranging book the author discusses its emergence in the Roman Empire under Constantine and some of its effects, ecclesiastical and secular, during the next 150 years. £16.50

Oxford University Press

commentary

Outside humanity

Helen McNeill

The German Sisters
Academy One Cinema

Margarete von Trotta's German tragedy is based on the history of journalist Christiane Ensslin's attempts to uncover the facts about the death of her terrorist sister Gudrun. The elder sister, renamed Juliane, is our narrator, and had been a girl rebel in the 1950s. Her younger sister Marianne had been pliant, seductive, dangerously receptive to their pastor father's Lutheran message of inescapable human depravity. The girls' childhood is revealed only gradually, counterpointed with the adult sisters' reversed roles. Juliane has grown up to be a liberal feminist journalist, slightly exploited by her equally feminist editor. But Marianne has become a terrorist: strong-willed, violent and imperiously demanding, she lives on the run. When she is captured she is subjected to sensory deprivation and dies, very likely murdered by her jailers.

The German Sisters begins in an atmosphere of curiosity and fear, with scenes of drained vitality colour. Sad-faced, long-haired Juliane (beautifully acted by Jutta Lampe) seems to represent decent, essentially private humanity trying to resist incursions from the destructive external world of history. But as von Trotta's script almost too relentlessly shows, the personal is political. One day Juliane thinks up just the right caption to go with some photos of Nazi mothers: "It is the mother who causes the most suffering; it is she who suffers most."

Von Trotta clearly sees women as fully historically answerable for all their evasions and actions. Marianne dies for her sins of commission. Even though we know it was she who as a child had vomited when forced to view scenes of Nazi atrocities, she is told by her sister when in prison that if she had been ten years older she would have been a Nazi. At this the neo-fascist waitress gives a little tight smile of sadistic satisfaction. History is unclear; the terrorist falls victim to those who think like her, in absolutes.

Meanwhile in her way Juliane pays with her life for her sins of omission. When Juliane declares early in the film that she is "too cowardly or too sensible" to have been a terrorist, she demonstrates a wilful political inactivity. *The German Sisters* climaxes with shattering images of Juliane's wild grief at her sister's death. Looking into the open coffin at her sister's gruesomely dead face, Juliane makes an association with concentration camp corpses which she and von Trotta no longer need to emphasize by flashback. Soon after, she decides to bring up Marianne's orphaned and persecuted

child although she had earlier rejected this responsibility. She also plans to devote the foreseeable future to investigating her sister's death and rehabilitating her memory. The sibling rivalry has ended with complete domination by Marianne. Like a demon who is also one's dearest flesh and blood, she takes over her humanist sister. It is the story of Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus appropriately transformed to women.

Although Juliane is the character with whom the audience is expected to identify, much of the film's message of inescapable responsibility comes across through the way Juliane's narrative gradually escapes from her control. Honesty and empathy are apparently inadequate tools for confrontation with an unresolved history. For the woman, love is the agency for both reward and punishment. When Juliane accepts the care of her orphaned nephew, she has symbolically redeemed her debt to the future and committed herself through love to finding a richer model for life than the hellfire preached by her father. This is not, however, enough. Through her passivity, Juliane has been absorbed into her sister's life. She has permitted herself to be caught in the specifically German trap of adoration of sheer will, whatever its aim.

But *The German Sisters* is no mere feminist footnote to a larger debate. Von Trotta is criticizing liberalism, the terrorist ethos and traditional film narrative by the same structural means. Marianne, who lives outside humanity as well as in human experience of history, all the turning points of *The German Sisters* occur off-stage, where ordinary people can't do anything about them. We learn of the suicide of Marianne's ex-husband, and of her arrest and death, only through conversation.

Most significantly, we never see and are never told just what constituted Marianne's terrorist activity. By keeping us in ignorance of Marianne's crimes, von Trotta personalizes our sympathies so that we are made even softer than Juliane. Such mystery increases Marianne's mythological stature, making her the archetype of the terrorist. Traditionally the mystery of woman has been part of cinematic glamour and seduction. Von Trotta rehearses this mystery and quite unmistakably sets about placing her audience in a position of weakness in relation to Marianne. At the same time the narrative presses towards encountering "damned ideas" so that the German past will not be repeated. *The German Sisters* has no heroes, and both its heroines disqualify themselves as bearers of belief. Glamorous mystery is a temptation of the medium which von Trotta examines and, I think, condemns. She does not, however, offer another solution.

The last time Marianne and Juliane see each other alive, through a wire-lined window, their faces are superimposed; this is in fact the moment when Marianne's spirit enters Juliane, though Juliane doesn't realize it. Formally the scene is a homage to the famous moment in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* when the faces and personalities of the nurse Alma and the actress Elisabet merge. Elisabet has decided to be silent since this is the only appropriate response to an age of absurdity. In *The German Sisters* a questioning silence and Nicholas Economou's sombre music often convey a greater depth of feeling than the dialogue, which tends to be too explicitly analytical. *Persona*, however, chronicled a retreat from a meaningless world. *The German Sisters* is about a richer, and more enduring issue, the impossibility of retreat from love and history.

"The Thackeray Silent Film Season" will be part of the London Film Festival this November. The programmes will be *Flesh and the Devil* (1926), King Vidor's *Show People* (1928), and previously unseen Chaplin shorts. All will have the orchestral accompaniment composed and conducted by Carl Davis.

FRANCE

The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion
CHRISTOPHER M. ANDREW
AND A.S. KANYA-FORSTNER

'Not merely a history of what happened 50 years ago. . . . The scholarly work should be required reading for anyone who still has illusions about the role of reason and morals in power politics.' *Times Educational Supplement*
'Carefully researched and clearly written' - *Times Literary Supplement* £12.00

Thames and Hudson

Behind the lines

It is well known that when writers meet, all they talk about is money. Ten days ago representatives of those writers' organizations that could afford to, met in Sweden to discuss money on a European scale. The fifth Congress of European Writers' Associations was held at a country retreat outside Stockholm that could have been the setting for a remake of Bergman's *Smiles of a Summer Night* - were it not for the seriousness of the proceedings. "There is a tightening up on culture all over Europe now," said a Norwegian, "and there are voices in Northern Europe reporting a crisis in commercial publishing and a cut-back in government support for literature through library budgets and cuts in cultural subsidies. Only the Finns were able to say that things were better now than they have ever been - and that was because things were so much worse five years ago."

The European Writers' Congress first met in West Berlin in 1977; since then it has met in Vienna, Florence and Amsterdam. Each time the proceedings have taken on something of the atmosphere of the host country. This year twenty-seven organizations were invited, but only fourteen turned up, and these were predominantly members of the Nordic Authors' Council. The Council has a long history of international co-operation going back to 1919; it includes, besides the Scandinavian countries, Iceland, Finland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland. The smallest member association is Samic (the police word for Lapp). The Samic claim no more than thirty writers, chiefly poets, whose language is as threatened as the Samic nomadic way of life is threatened by tourist roads, and Nato and Russian military bases.

International co-operation clearly has its advantages for writers, for in 1947, in a spirit of post-war reconstruction and reconciliation, the publishers' and writers' organizations in Sweden, Norway and Denmark agreed to a Standard Scandinavian Contract which set as a minimum

royalty sixteen per cent. Since then the agreement has been extended and revised, and it is about to be revised again. The excellence of the contract was something of a shock to British writers present, whose organizations are struggling to establish a minimum royalty of ten per cent, but find it hard going to establish the idea of a standard contract at all.

The close links between most of the attending organizations led to a largely technical discussion of contractual clauses, library lending rights and so forth. There were voices raised to protest that in spite of current difficulties these were "luxury problems". It was pointed out that no southern countries, not even the French, were represented. The complaint of a southern delegate at a previous congress was repeated: it was all very well to discuss the minutiae of public lending rights, but what could you do if you didn't even have public libraries? It was felt that Unesco's grand World Congress on Books, held in London last week, was not going to produce very much, other than long speeches.

The Swedish Congress did manage to raise its head from other people's contracts for long enough to take a look at the future. Jon Bing, a Norwegian lawyer and science-fiction writer, produced a non-fiction account of the implications of the new technology of the word-processor, computer and laser-printer. Not only will the word-processor cut out all the mechanical crafts connected with publishing, the whole nature of publication and distribution will be changed. All texts and information will be stored in computers, and journals like the TLS will be reduced to mere catalogues of information available on demand from the computer. Not only that, books themselves will no longer appear in editions. Instead, the would-be reader will simply order one copy of the text from the computer, to be printed to his personal specifications on his nearest laser-printer, which will

also cut, bind and produce a perfect index.

Apart from spelling the end of "reminders", the implications of "on demand" publishing are serious for the book world, in terms of its geography as much as its economics, since author, computer and printer can all be on separate continents. Already there are fears of the development of a "natural monopoly" of such computerized information in the United States, where the process is most advanced. (Curiously, this is paralleled by the "natural monopoly" created by the English language, in which the entire Congress was conducted. Since at least fifty per cent of all books published in the non-British member countries are translations from the English or American, especially the best-sellers, there was a quiet current of resentment against the Anglo-American language.)

Jon Bing, who is about to publish a novel from his word-processor, was not worried by the new technology, provided that the system is kept open. After all, he said, what are writers but designers and producers of information? Characteristically, the first question he was asked at the end of his paper was: "How do we get paid?"

If you have any doubts about the pecuniary, as opposed to literary concerns of writers, then I recommend a visit to Sotheby's on June 29, when they are holding a long sale of literary manuscripts. Lots 340-425 have come from the archives of the Society of Authors, and they include such literary gems as James Joyce's application form for membership in 1934 (estimated price £300-£350), Evelyn Waugh's application in 1947 (£150-£180), and his resignation in 1950 on the grounds that the Society had used its funds "to enable a socialist member of Parliament to plead the cause of Californian communists" (£150-£200).

Other writers seen in the great light of contracts, royalties and copyright infringements are Sean O'Casey,

Nancy Mitford, Herbert Read, Bernard Shaw and Edith Sitwell, who seems to have complained to the Society incessantly. Sotheby's catalogue reproduces some choice and possibly libellous remarks. John Wain described as "practically illiterate". It is a relief to find E. M. Forster writing "money is generally only one of the author's objectives - vanity, the desire to create, the belief that he has a 'message' also comes in."

Sotheby's are sponsoring this year's International Poetry Competition on behalf of the Arvon Foundation. With a total of £21,000 in prize money this is the biggest poetry competition ever, and they (though perhaps not the judges) are hoping to attract many more than the 35,000 entries for last year's prizes. At £2 per poem in the English language the competition should raise large sums for the Arvon Foundation, but Sotheby's are not being entirely altruistic. A minimum of 35,000 entries should produce sufficient for more than one future sale of literary manuscripts.

One of the problems of writing this, or any other column is that of finding some way of avoiding saying "his" when it could equally be "her", except that to say "her" implies that it could not equally be "his". "His or her" sounds clumsy, and current usage has associated the word "man" with the male gender that to pretend that you are using it in its Old English sense as a generic term for humankind is no defence.

The Book Branch of the National Union of Journalists, which represents editors working in publishing houses, has now produced a useful "Non-Sexist Code of Practice for Book Publishing". This discusses how and why sexual stereotyping has been reinforced by language, and its vehicle, books, and has some helpful tips on altering a text to avoid sexual or social stereotypes without altering the sense: "workforce" for "manpower", for example, or "guard" for "watchman".

There is however a sinister (pace all

left-handed persons) aspect to the pamphlet. A code of practice is binding on NUJ members, and what are we to make of these sentences on sexism in fiction? "If the author refuses to allow amendment, and in the editor's view the sexism can be removed without fundamentally changing the novel, the chapel should consider action to secure the change. Fundamentally sexist novels could be rejected for publication or taken up as a chapel issue with management." I note that this is written in the conditional tense, but surely this is a threat of censorship.

It is almost closing time for entries to a narrower, and probably bitterer competition than the Sotheby's-Arvon Poetry Prize. In the last few days the sixty or so publishers with fiction lists will have been entering the names of their authors who they think will qualify as the Best Young British Novelists in 1983.

This unofficial competition is the successor to the Book Marketing Council's 1982 promotion, the Best of British Authors. You will recall that there were twenty of these, and there were surprises about who was, and who was not, the Best. Once again there will be only twenty best. The selection from an anticipated entry of 150 will be made by three as yet unnamed beneficiaries of the 1982 promotion. It is to be hoped that this is not the beginning of an unofficial British literary academy.

Desmond Clarke of the Book Marketing Council claims that the Best of British Authors led to the additional sale of at least 250,000 books. The 1983 promotion could have a startling effect on writers whose literary careers are about to break. To qualify as one of the Best Young British Novelists you need two things: you need to be under the age of forty on January 5, 1983; you need a publisher willing to contribute £500 towards the promotion. I am talking about money again.

Robert Hewison

Author, Author

Competition No 75

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than July 9. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers to the first, correct or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, Times Literary Supplement, PO Box 7, Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8EX. The solution and results will appear on July 16.

1 One evening he tied two cats together by their hind legs with a string about six feet in length, and threw them from the wall into the midst of that noble, that frightened cat, that royal bed... The ground, first tried to fly, then the string by which they were tied together was tightly stretched across the bed then, however, feeling that they were not able to get off, they began to pull to and fro, and to reel about with heart-rending caterwaulings.

2 No, I did not move, and with beating heart I watched it die with a trembling and cruel joy. It was a cat! If it had been a dog, I would rather have cut the copper wire with my teeth than let it suffer a second more. When the cat was quite dead, but yet warm, I went to feel it and pull its tail!

3 When Sophie and Paul saw him climb trees, they did all in their power to make him come down; but Beauclerc would not obey and continued to climb and to eat the small birds. One could hear their plaintive *cule-cules*. All three quotations are translations from French.

Competition No 71
Winner: Hazel Hill
Answers:
1 Fancy what a game of chess would be if all the chessmen had passions and intellect, more or less small and cunning; if you were not only uncertain about your adversary's men, but a little uncertain also about your own; if your knight could shuffle himself on to a new square by the side; if your bishop, in disgust at casting, could wheedle your pawns out of their places; and if your pawns, hating you because they are pawns, could make away from their appointed posts that you might get check-mate on a sudden.
George Eliot, *Felix Holt*.

2 Mr Featherstone was a little nettled on being told that he was to be the king's rook, but smoothed his wrinkled brow on being assured that no *mauvaise plaisanterie* was intended.
Thomas Love Peacock, *Melincourt*, Chapter 28.

3 Long did he meditate. Then, his sombre decision taken, he summoned his two torchbearers, and they led the pawn away into outer darkness, to the sound of cymbals and drums.
E. M. Forster, "Chess at Craxov".

Counter-tenors

Sir - Millo Keynes (Letters, May 28) makes the bizarre suggestion that choir-masters deliberately teach boys to sing falsetto in order to lay down a supply of altos for the future. My impression, from Peter Giles's book and personal acquaintance, is that the development of the adult alto from the juvenile head voice is usually quite spontaneous. Some choir-masters may realize that a well-grown fifteen or sixteen-year-old treble with an incipient moustache is a potential counter-tenor, and encourage the youngster to develop his voice in that direction; but others may be completely baffled, as Alfred Deller's was, by the persistence of a high voice in an otherwise normally developing adolescent.

The idea that a true counter-tenor is really a high tenor and that self-confessed falsetto singers such as the late Alfred Deller are strictly mere "male altos" is hard to justify on either etymological or historical grounds. As Peter Giles points out, the word "counter-tenor" originally denoted a part, not a type of voice. The original meaning of *contratenor* - a part set against the tenor - became obsolete with the disappearance of medieval methods of composition; by the seventeenth century "counter-tenor" had come to be the normal English term for the alto part in concerted music, whether vocal or instrumental. In *The New World of Words* (1706) it is defined as "one of the mean or middle parts in music"; in Tansur's *New Musical Grammar* (1746) as "between treble and alto". Well into the nineteenth century it was regularly used of female and castrato voices as well as of male ones. Dr Burney, when referring to women and castrati, used "contralto" and "counter-tenor" interchangeably. Lord Mountecucumbe's account of the 1834 Handel commemoration contains the earliest instance I have so far met of "counter-tenor" being used to distinguish a male voice from a female one: "There being no good counter-tenor, the song 'He was despised' which is generally given to a female voice, was given to a male voice, contralto." A letter to the *Musical World* in 1836 indicates "alto" being used as an alternative to "counter-tenor" for the high male voice: "Permit me to draw attention to a situation in which myself and others who have the misfortune of being denominated counter-tenor singers are placed by the introduction female contraltos in most of the festival concerts, instead of the legitimate altos."

As the century advanced, "alto" almost ousted "counter-tenor", but not entirely: Haydn Grover, an alto at the Temple church from 1884 to 1892, was described by a colleague as having "a counter-tenor voice of real beauty". John Hough's statement, "In our time, 'counter-tenor' is understood the rare *tenore alto*" is curious, given the fact that at that date the word was rarely used at all, and that reference works simply described it as an archaic synonym for "alto".

The distinction between "natural" high tenors and "unnatural" falsetto is in any case problematic. It has long been a commonplace among anthropologists and sociologists that "natural" and "unnatural" have little or no meaning in relation to human skills and potentialities. Alto voices of the sort described in my first paragraph, though falsetto in a physiological sense, are not the product of deliberate contrivance, and are not felt to be unnatural by their possessors - who may even feel uncomfortable singing (as distinct from speaking) in the supposedly "natural" chest voice. Recently (January 24) the veteran Swiss tenor Hugues Cuénod, a distinguished interpreter of the *haute-contre* repertory and of such stratospheric tenor roles as Rimsky-Korsakov's astrologer in *The Golden Cockerel*, told an interviewer on BBC Radio 3's programme *Music Weekly* that he was not really a tenor at all, but a baritone with, as he put it, "a very easy falsetto". According to Jean Tarsaud "false tenors" are individuals who, judging by the length of their vocal folds, should

rightly be baritones, but who pass as tenors by singing on "stopped cords" are quite common, and often indistinguishable from real tenors acoustically. To my ear at least Russell Oberlin's voice is not more natural or tenor-like than that of any other counter-tenor; if anything he sounds more feminine than most of them. It is quite possible that he uses "stopped cords" without knowing it; singers do not as a rule know what their vocal muscles are doing.

G. B. Shaw seems to have had some practical knowledge of counter-tenors. Describing one of Arnold Dolmetsch's concerts of early music in 1894 he wrote, "The only vocalist whom I felt inclined to congratulate was a counter-tenor, the peculiarity of whose voice had saved him from the lot of the drawing-room songster."

FRANCES KILLINGLEY.
The Library, University of Essex,
Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex.

The St Mark's Horses

Sir - In a caption to an illustration on page 573 of your issue of May 28 you speak of four horses now on St Mark's in Venice as having been brought to Constantinople by Justinian from Ephesus. I have never heard this story before.

To the best of my knowledge the only ancient author to record the origin of the horses is Codinus (ed Lambecius, page 53, line 15), who says that they "came from Chios in the time of Theodosius II". Codinus wrote in the fifteenth century but in this part of his work he is transcribing an anonymous author of the twelfth or thirteenth century. (Those who are interested can find further details in an article of mine in *ES&J* XLI, page 47.) Unless the authority for your story is eminently superior I shall continue to favour the version of Codinus, who is in any case generally regarded as a good authority on the monuments of Constantinople, for the following reason. Justinian and Ephesus look like sensible guesses, just as the organizers of the recent exhibition at the Royal Academy devoted to the horses conjectured that they were brought by Constantine I from Rome. Theodosius II and Chios, a minor emperor and an obscure city, give me the impression of having a genuine tradition behind them.

DAVID HUNT.
Old Place, East Wing, Lindfield,
Sussex.

Public Lending Right

Sir - The fact that, at long last, the hard-fought-for public lending right, providing payments to authors of books loaned through public libraries, is to be implemented, is much welcomed by almost all of us in the book trade. The Publishers Association therefore very much regrets the tone and content of the letters published in *The Times* and the *Times Literary Supplement* from Lord Wil-
lis (Times, May 1) Miss Bridgford (Times, May 24) and T.S. May (14), and Mr Julian Chancelor (Times, May 25). As there appears to be some overstatement of comment to the effect that publishers (a) did not participate in the campaign for PLR, and (b) are unjustly demanding a share, perhaps I may attempt to balance this record.

This spate of letters appears to flow from the somewhat innocuous statement in the PA's *Annual Report*, which is widely circulated in the trade, and which, after welcoming the pending introduction of PLR, states (in full):
Eligible authors must place themselves on the register, and entitlement will be paid to them, but publishers may undertake these functions for them, and reach voluntary agreements with authors

on any appropriate allocation of the right or entitlements from it. This seems to us to be a factually accurate statement of the position. The facts are:

(a) The Publishers Association has actively supported PLR, first suggested by Eric Loyland and John Brophy in 1951, particularly since 1959 when Sir Alan Herbert, strongly supported by the authors' organizations, and by this Association, made PLR a personal crusade. Since then, in support of the formidable work of the Society of Authors and the Writers Action Group, we have been closely and actively concerned in the activities of the Authors' and Publishers' Lending Right Association (APLRA), the Arts Council Working Party on PLR (1965), the Books Working Party (1971-72), the Department of Education's Technical Investigation Group (1974-75) whose Report was the basis of the present scheme, and the parliamentary campaign (as many MPs and Ministers will witness). The Association, like the Society of Authors and the Writers Guild, is now represented on the PLR Advisory Committee set up by the Registrar, and the PA continues to give the scheme its full support.

(b) The question of whether publishers and authors should be free to reach agreement on any sharing of the right must, as the Act stands, be an individual decision, dependent on the circumstances of each book. But it should be remembered that many publishers (often themselves very small firms) undertake, for very little financial return, the publication of valuable works of literature for which the market is almost entirely lacking through libraries. They do, therefore, like authors, suffer, considerable loss of income, and have

the same claims to compensation. This was recognized between the Society of Authors and the Publishers Association when they agreed in 1972 that any earnings from PLR should be divided 75 per cent to the author and 25 per cent to the publisher - an agreement which lapsed during the long campaign. In Australia, the Act provides for a statutory division.

It is true that the UK Act confers the right as a property right on authors, just as copyright is conferred, and permits authors to assign the right. That is perfectly proper. But it is not improper (and certainly it is not "blackmail") for a publisher who provides the skills and investment involved in publishing to negotiate, in the publishing contract, for a reasonable share of all earnings from the work, including PLR.

T. J. RIX.
Publishers Association, 19 Bedford
Square, London WC1.

Newcastle University Library

Sir - Scholars wishing to consult Special Collections, including Trevelyan and Runciman papers, at Newcastle University Library, should be warned that the Library will begin moving to its new building on June 28.

It is regretted that during the move the Library will have to close down many of its services, including Special Collections, but we hope that the Library will be able to re-open in the new building by mid-August.

ALISTAIR ELLIOT.
University Library, Newcastle
upon Tyne.

'The Strangers All Are Gone'

Sir - In his review (June 4) of *The Strangers All Are Gone*, Mr Alan Bell mentions the reference to Webster and the Spaniard's part. I expressed ignorance there of why Dublin should have been the city destined for this poisonous vapour. Mr Kingsley Amis has now drawn my attention to *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney*, by J. O. Bartley (Cork University Press, 1954), where many seventeenth-century examples are given of traditional Irish disapproval of breaking wind.

ANTHONY POWELL.
The Chantry, near Frome, Somerset.

'The Woman in White'

Sir - Anne Duchéne says (Commentary, May 28) of John Bruce's production of *The Woman in White* (BBC 2): "... one watches a 'classic series' to enjoy the furniture, the costumes, and the acting. On which counts this production by John Bruce disappoints nobody."

It disappoints me. In episode one, the house at Limmeridge appeared to be furnished with lampshades c1890 - from the last Oscar Wilde production no doubt, and not in accord with the costumes (c1840-50). (I also have my doubts about the anachronism of the resources to do the thing at all, I can't see why this sort of thing should happen.

ANNA SUTCLIFFE.
14 Drummond Court, Leeds 16.

Among this week's contributors

MICHAEL BALFOUR's books include *The Kaiser and His Times*, 1964.

MICHAEL BAXANDALL's *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* was published in 1972.

RICHARD BROWN is the co-editor of the *James Joyce Broadsheet*.

G. M. CARSTAIRS was Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Edinburgh, 1961-73, and President of the World Federation for Mental Health 1967-71.

ROY FULLER's autobiography, *Souvenirs*, was published in 1980.

ROY HARRIS is Professor of General Linguistics at the University of Oxford. His most recent book is *The Language Myth*, 1981.

RONALD HAYMAN's books include *Beckett*, 1970, and *The German Theatre*, 1975.

PETER HERBERT-WATTS's most recent book is *Introducing John Paul II*, 1982.

ROBERT HEYRON's *In Anger: Culture in the Cold War 1945-1980* was published last year.

CHARLES HORS is a lecturer in Renaissance Studies at the Warburg Institute. He is the author of *Titan*, 1980.

GRACE JANTZEN is a lecturer in the History and Philosophy of Religion at King's College, London.

EMERY JONES is Professor of Geography at the London School of Economics.

FRANÇOIS KESAUDEY is the author of *Churchill and de Gaulle*, 1981.

GRÆVEL LINDORF's biography of De Quincey, *The Opium Eater*, was published in 1981.

HILLEN MCNEIL teaches English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

RODOLFO O'HANLON recently completed a study of Charles Darwin and Joseph Conrad.

VALERIE PEARL is President of New Hall, Cambridge.

DONALD PENNINGTON's books include *Seventeenth-Century Europe*, 1970.

PAT ROGERS is the author of *The Augustan Vision*, 1974, and *Henry Fielding: A Biography*, 1979.

ALAN RYAN is a Fellow of New College, Oxford.

C. THURSTAN SHAW was until recently Professor of Archaeology at the University of Ibadan. His most recent book is *Nigeria, in the Ancient Peoples and Places* series, published in 1978.

C. H. SISSON's translation of *The Divine Comedy* was published in 1980.

SIR RICHARD SOUTHERN's books include *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 1953, and *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, 1970.

FRANCES SPALDING is the author of *Roger Fry: Art and Life*, 1980.

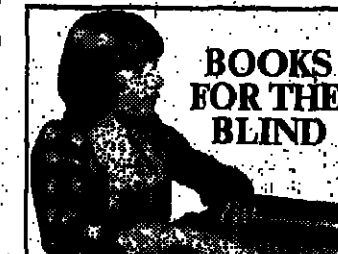
NORMAN STONE's books include *The Eastern Front 1914-1917*, 1976.

DAVID SWEETMAN's collection of poems *Looking Into the Deep End* was published in 1981.

MICHAEL TANNER is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Cambridge.

DAVID TROTTER's study of twentieth-century American English and Irish poetry, *The Making of the Reader*, will be published next year.

LAURENCE WHITEHEAD is a Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford.



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The errant Empress

Norman Stone

BRIGITTE HAMANN

Elisabeth, Kaiserin wider Willen
650pp. Munich: Amalthea.
3 85002 147 5

Empress Elisabeth of Austria was a legend in her life-time. She was by far the most glamorous consort of the nineteenth century. Her fairy-like beauty – so well captured by Winterhalter – and the air of tragedy that she carried around made her a first-class romantic heroine until her death, at the hands of an Italian anarchist, in 1898. Her husband, Emperor Franz Joseph, though finding consolation with a much more prosaic figure, Frau Schatt, never forgot Elisabeth. In his study, above his desk, there was a large portrait of her in her prime, in the 1860s, when she evoked the legendary Vienna of Strauss waltzes, snow-bound castles and romantic escapades.

What lay behind Elisabeth's legend? Egon Caesar, Count Curti, wrote a very good biography (translated into English in 1930). Brigitte Hamann has used a wider range of sources, even though a key archive – Elisabeth's letters to her mother – remains closed. She can afford to be less discreet than Curti was in revealing Habsburg family secrets, and already has a good biography of Elisabeth's son, the suicide Crown Prince Rudolf, to her name. The result is a considerable demolition-job. For Elisabeth exercised a malign influence on practically anything she came near to. She turned her husband into an automaton. She neglected her two elder children shamefully. She made life difficult even for people who tried to be helpful, and about the only positive achievement of her influence was the Compromise with Hungary in 1867 – turned out to be something of a disaster.

In the last twenty years of her life, from the age of thirty to the age of fifty, Elisabeth became one of Europe's great wanderers, drifting to Hungary, to England, to Ireland – anywhere but at home with her husband and children, whose Christmas she seems quite often to have missed. Rudolf, caught between a cold and distant mother and a martinet father, became a nervous wreck. Gisela, the eldest child, bore her mother to tears precisely from the moment of her birth, and was neglected altogether. She was married off to Prince Leopold of Bavaria. Of her first child, Elisabeth's first grand-daughter, the empress wrote that the baby was "of a rare ugliness". The only child that evoked any warmth in Elisabeth was the youngest daughter, Marie Valerie, who was conceived in a brief resumption of physical relations, to mark the new agreement with Hungary.

It is evident from this book that the one person Elisabeth hated about was herself. The famous beauty was the outcome of a lavishly-mounted operation, which left little time for anything else. Her waist was exceedingly narrow – twenty inches – and even then the empress would have herself laced up (it took an hour) so far that she could hardly breathe. She weighed only 110 pounds, though her height was almost six feet. This was achieved by dieting on a heroic scale, and by constant use of gymnastic equipment, which was installed in the residences everywhere. At night Elisabeth would wear masks of fresh strawberries; she would drink five or six whites-of-egg with salt in order to keep her face free from the ravages that dieting might have caused. To keep the empress's hair in proper condition was an enormous job. The hair grew to her ankles; to wash it took a whole day, and even the ordinary day's hair-dressing took three hours. The hair-dresser had previously been employed in the Burgtheater, where her work impressed Elisabeth, and she was engaged by the Court at a salary larger than a university professor's.

The empress's day makes extraordinary reading: most of it spent

in dressing, or exercising, or having her hair prepared, after which there would be half-an-hour's family dinner and an early retirement to gossip with a Hungarian maid, Ida Ferenczy (who destroyed her correspondence with Elisabeth although, from a surviving fragment, we hear Elisabeth tell her "I think of you a thousand times as my hair is being dressed"). The one positive outcome – if it can so be described – was a certain quantity of shabby sub-Heine verse, which Elisabeth took seriously enough to have deposited in Switzerland as a "literary archive". Miss Hamann quotes a good deal of it. Elisabeth refers to herself as "Titania" and to her husband as "a third of ill omen" (*Pechevich*). "I'm going to kill myself," she told him. "Then you go to hell!" he answered. "I'm there already," she said – all of it in front of her adolescent daughter. Her love-affairs seem – according to Miss Hamann – to have enlivened this empty existence, although Elisabeth sometimes kept some bluff, hearty horse-riding gentlemen on the boil for a time. The wife of one of them, "Mr. Middleton, destroyed the empress's correspondence in a jealous fury. Did it really contain much?"

It fits that Elisabeth was quite ruthless when it came to money. She secreted funds, through the Rothschilds, in Switzerland "just in case". She kept savings accounts in Vienna, under pseudonyms, and played the stock exchange. But her sense of public duties was minimal. She appeared for the Silver Wedding looking, Court gossip has it, "like an Indian widow about to be burnt". But she refused to turn up for the Gala opening of the Vienna Opera in 1869. A special salon had been constructed for her, and the opening – a

The erratic Emperor

Michael Balfour

JOHN C. G. RÖHL AND NICOLAUS SOMMER (Editors)

Kaiser Wilhelm II:
New Interpretations
319pp. Cambridge University Press.
£19.50.
0 521 23898 6

For the treatment of a character who has been the subject of five English biographies in eighteen years, "relative neglect" may seem a surprising term. Yet in the case of Kaiser Wilhelm II, it is justifiable. For the books in question were all written by amateurs and based upon secondary sources (though these included substantial printed collections of German and British diplomatic documents). The Kaiser still awaits the treatment given to his English relatives by Sir Sidney Lee, Sir Harold Nicolson and Sir John Wheeler-Bennett.

There are several reasons for this apparent anomaly. Until 1941, a full study was ruled out not only because documents were still inaccessible but also because the subject was still alive. After the Kaiser's death Germany and the world were for some time in no condition to make the necessary interest of historians, particularly in Germany, turned away from personalities to society and structures. The eleven contributors to the present volume, only three are German and none of them holds a chair at a University. But – and this is the composition of a thoroughgoing study of Wilhelm II based both on all the archival evidence and on descriptions by his contemporaries would be a mammoth task. Although two of the biographers are said to have hardly been expected to be all-embracing. For some time the road to a definitive study will probably lie through a series of monographs, as in this collection of essays.

The expectation of finding fresh archival evidence in this collection is enhanced by its claim to contain "new interpretations". These – hopes, however, may well be disappointed. Some of what is said here has been said

performance of *Don Giovanni* – was put off to suit her. Even then, although she was in Vienna, she refused to appear, saying that it was "inconvenient". From time to time, she did make the rounds of military hospitals. But she had no sense of how to behave or of what to say. Besides, she was deeply ashamed of her teeth, and disliked opening her mouth, so that no-one could understand what she said. "Are you married?" she asked one soldier. "Often," came the reply. "Do you have children?" she said. "From time to time," answered the soldier. She was also not above humiliating Franz Joseph in public. "He was so spoilt when young that it's the only way to get anything out of him," she explained. There, she was probably right. With all of her narcissism, hypochondria, petulance, tireless obsessions and contempt for anything that mattered, he remained devoted to her. "Your mannikin," he signed himself. He plodded on through his work-filled day in the vain hope of a kind word from her.

In one matter, we can sympathize with Elisabeth. She detested and despised the rigid Court life of Vienna, in which a variety of officials kept watch over the minutiae of an exceptionally cumbersome and archaic ceremonial in which the simplest and most homely details would be subdivided into prescribed stages. A family dinner, for instance, must have been hell. No-one was allowed to speak unless spoken to by the emperor, and no-one was allowed to go on eating after the emperor had finished. But since Franz Joseph gobbled down his food and never ate much in any case, there was never much dinner and seldom any talk. Napoleon III was so bored that he started doing prestidigitation with the

empress's plates, explaining, later, that he had learnt that kind of thing in his fair-ground youth. People tumbled out of their dinners starving, and Sacher's Hotel blazed in that era from hungry Archdukes. The only person who ever got round this problem was the poetess-queen of Romania, "Carmen Sylva", who gushed and fluted at Franz Joseph until well past his bed-time. He never forgave her.

Elisabeth was assassinated in Geneva in 1898 by an Italian anarchist, Lucheni. He was a proto-Mussolini, one of the pieces of flotsam (Gavrilo Princip was another) thrown up by the social changes of the later nineteenth century. He had meant to assassinate the French President, but his visit to Geneva was cancelled. Lucheni did not have the money to go to Rome and murder King Umberto (who was murdered the following year at Monza, by someone else). Elisabeth was third on the list, for she, fortuitously, was at Geneva. She was killed with a file that Lucheni had whittled down to razor-sharpness.

Miss Hamann does not end this long and depressing book with any conclusions. But some can perhaps be drawn. It was part of Elisabeth's tragedy – and not of hers alone – that she lived in an era when monarchy was losing its significance. She herself knew this well enough. The Habsburg Empire, she said, was "the wreckage of old grandeur". She agreed with "Carmen Sylva" that republics were "the only reasonable form of state". The ceremonial through which she stumbled was, to her, quite tedious and burdensome. In an earlier epoch, the ceremonial

would have been virtually second-nature, just as she did the role of consort to a man she did not love. Her mother-in-law, Archduchess Sophie, though married to a foolish bore, knew quite well what her place in the world was: she could devote herself unthinkingly to it, caring for her husband, his public functions, her children and seeking religious solace for the disappointments she had to endure.

Elisabeth was not like that. She had inherited, from her native Bavaria, the heady notions of German romanticism. Her father, Duke Max in Bayern, counted as a liberal contemptuous of religion and the proprieties (he had several of his eight illegitimate children to live in his residence, and spent most of his time with them, rather than with his wife and her brood). Elisabeth's three sisters went, each in their own way, badly off the tracks: one, the Queen of Naples, had a baby by a Belgian officer of the Papal guard; another, Duchess of Alençon, fell literally madly in love, at the age of forty, with a middle-aged married doctor from Graz. The monarchical sense of duty, which kept courts together in earlier ages, was becoming meaningless in the middle nineteenth century; in the next two generations there was an extraordinarily long list of runaways, proto-revolutionaries, exhibitionists, sympathisers and Ludwig the Second in any dynasty outside western Europe. The old order, in the sense of ceremonial, duty, and religion, went in 1848. Elisabeth was one of the casualties. Her dreary, destructive life was in marked contrast to the happy atmosphere of earlier Habsburg Courts. No doubt Franz Joseph was a Karenin-figure. But Elisabeth became her own Vronsky.

before. Dr Kohut for example writes:

Although it is pointless of course to speculate what might have happened had Friedrich lived longer or his father died sooner, one can argue that, given German political realities and the personalities of Victoria and Friedrich, the realisation of the ideal implicit in their marriage may well have been doomed from the start.

In *The Kaiser and his Times* the present reviewer wrote:

The prospect [of what might follow from the marriage of Fritz and Vicky] was frustrated by the arbitrary way in which Death dealt and withholds his blows. If William I and the Prince Consort had both lived for the threescore and ten years allotted by the Psalmist – and no more, if Fritz had lived as long as his father, much would certainly have been changed. But just how much? Can the course of history really depend on such a limited number of heartbeats? Were not forces at work in Germany strong enough to have frustrated Fritz even if he could have met them in his full vigour?

A further disappointment is that some of the new material from the archives (especially those at Windsor) proves to say much the same things as have been published already. Thus a letter at Windsor from the Crown Princess to her mother is given as the authority for Queen Victoria's belief that her daughter took maternal responsibility too far. But just such a letter was published by Ponsonby in 1928. The Queen's anger with Wilhelm for his attitude to the Battenberg marriage is similarly attributed. Count Corti published the letter in 1954.

John Röhl certainly produces details which invalidate my belief (shared by Wheeler-Bennett) that there was no worthwhile evidence of Wilhelm ever having been unfaithful. These earlier dates – all the same from before his accession and are admitted to have been trivial; they do not having been, by monarchical standards, a moral man – which is characterised (There is no discussion of his relationship with Countess von Waldeck). The Eulenburg letters

which Professor Röhl has so carefully edited certainly show that so far as the Count stood closer to Wilhelm and exercised a more continuous influence on him than did anybody else – but this is confirmation rather than new discovery. What would have been welcome (and what may come in the third volume of the letters) is a discussion of the Kaiser's conduct over the Eulenburg trial.

In an essay on the Kaiser and his military entourage, Wilhelm Delist brings his extensive knowledge of German military history to illuminate the *Kommandogewalt*. But although much of the detail is new and welcome, not only has the extra-constitutional position of the "All-Highest" been long familiar but also the way in which various army and naval commanders reported to him direct instead of being co-ordinated by a single Commander-in-Chief. What is not discussed is the use (or non-use) of the *Kommandogewalt* after war has broken out.

Paul Kennedy, with characteristic erudition and common-sense, discusses how far German Weltpolitik was made by the Kaiser and how far by the milieu which shaped both him and it. He reaches the eminently sound but scarcely novel conclusion that both were involved. There were a number of things which one cannot imagine happening in a significantly different way unless one presupposes so many other alterations to the world as to turn the exercise into idle speculation. But times have followed from comparatively minor changes of behaviour. To say that such changes are impossible would come close to denying free will. What one would have welcomed in this book would have been the discussion – on the basis of newly unearthed documents – of one or two specific decisions throwing light on how far they were taken by the Kaiser and how far by others. The closest we come to this is Kathy Lertman's discussion of the extent to which important appointments were decided on between 1900 and 1905 by the Kaiser as compared with Bismarck. Her conclusion is that while "the regulation of such matters to others" was not prepared to leave Bismarck when he had a political reason for wanting to effect a

personnel change, generally seems to have been able to do so. Did this amount to "personal rule"? And in what respect is the interpretation new?

Paradoxically the direction in which the book does break new ground is not in bringing forward new evidence but in applying the theories of psychology to the Kaiser and his surroundings. But whereas one can, by comparing who did or said what, the extent to which a theory fits the known facts about a given personality must remain largely a matter of judgment. There may well be readers who will regard as far-fetched Nicolaus Sommer's explanation of the extent to which homosexuality was rampant in Imperial Germany, which he characterizes as a male society that pushed to an extreme unknown anywhere else in Europe the repression of the feminine. I found it interesting and plausible and would say the same about Kohut's identification of Wilhelm's mental condition as "narcissism" though perhaps in his forthcoming book he will explain more fully what psychologists understand by that term). Such an explanation switches attention back again to Wilhelm's relations with his parents and particularly his mother; it was her lack of affection and encouragement, combined with the tendency to domineer, which was the fundamental cause of his insecurity, and that insecurity was the fundamental cause of his erratic and impetuous behaviour.

May it not be that this insecurity and deprivation set up a tension which was too strong to be repressed and which, if it had not been allowed to find an outlet in irrational acts, would have led to lasting paranoia? Professor Röhl appositely says that, although Wilhelm wanted everything about him to be big, he only had little breakdowns. And any explanation of his character must take into account the impression one often receives that underneath there was a shrewd, humorous and even tolerant character who was observing with a critical and almost disapproving eye the antics of his more superficial self. Some contributor to this volume might with advantage have repeated the Kaiser's remark to Bismarck, "I know you wish me well but I am what I am and I cannot change."

LINGUISTICS

ROBERT E. INNIS

Karl Bühler: Semiotic Foundations of Language Theory

168pp. New York: Plenum. N.Y.
0 306 40781 4

The name of Karl Bühler, whose very original paper on "The Axiomatization of the Language Sciences" Robert Innis here translates for the first time into English half a century after its publication in *Kant Studien*, is not one which nowadays looms large in the study of language. But there are signs, including this translation and Innis's introductory essay on "Key Themes in Bühler's Language Theory", of a revival of interest in his work.

As professor of psychology at the University of Vienna during the 1930s, Bühler was among the most influential European intellectuals who attempted to take the development of linguistic theory beyond the positions established by Saussure in the *Cours de linguistique générale*. Bühler's work was recognized as important not only by psychologists but also by linguists and philosophers. Trubetzkoy acknowledged an indebtedness to Bühler in his own work on phonology. Cassirer cited Bühler's analyses as corroborating the treatment of language proposed in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Popper wrote of reading Bühler as an event of great significance in his own development as a philosopher. Jakobson took over and expanded Bühler's analysis of the functions of speech. But today few students of language have any detailed acquaintance with Bühler's writings.

The reasons for this lapse into obscurity Innis does not go into, apart from observing that except in the German-language countries, "the trajectories of twentieth century linguistics and language theory have not followed Bühler's work". If they had, things might have worked out

better: the barren bi-planar theories which dominate much of contemporary linguistics might never have become so firmly entrenched.

In his exposition of Bühler's views, Innis understandably concentrates upon Bühler's principle of abstractive relevance and the distinction between index field and symbol field. He relates these notions on the one hand to Gestalt Theory and on the other to the descriptive application of linguistic field theory by Trier. He points out how Bühler's "dialectic of situation and context in language use" and his "insistence on the social matrix of language and the primacy of action" are in many respects close to and anticipate the later Wittgenstein.

His essay also examines Bühler's discussion of the views of Mill and Husserl. For Bühler the difference between the two was of great significance. Husserl offered a theory of meaning which was an "act" theory. Mill, by contrast, presented an "organon" theory. Bühler's main objection to Husserl was that the Husserlian "language consciousness" could not be explained other than as something already derived from the intersubjective exchange of linguistic signs. A "subjectively intending consciousness" would have nothing to intend – at least, not to intend linguistically – without taking language for granted as a social practice. Hence, Bühler held, "linguistic research has a great interest in being permitted, in the sense of a Millian analysis, axiomatically to place the fact of the intersubjective exchange of signs at the starting point of its analyses".

There is a great deal here that might profitably have been commented on, even briefly, but which is passed over in silence. Is the distinction between an "act" theory and an "organon" theory genuinely a distinction between theories in conflict? Why did this chicken-and-egg problem about the relative priority of the individual and

The exchange of signs

Roy Harris

the social come to be one of the great hang-ups of language theory in the first half of the twentieth century? How was Bühler's backing of Mill versus Husserl tied up with his objections to Saussure? (For some people might suppose, not unreasonably, that a principal merit of Saussurean linguistics was to have reconciled within the same theoretical framework the notion of *la langue* as the possession of the individual and the notion of *la parole* as the possession of the community.)

One thing Bühler saw which Saussure failed to see was the significance of the phenomenon of metaphor. To this topic he devoted an important section of his *Sprachtheorie*, and Innis's essay rightly does likewise. Echoing Quinlan's view that "poene omne dictum metaphora est", Bühler held that there is nothing exceptional about metaphor. On the contrary, "every linguistic composite is metaphorical in some degree". Innis compares this with the approach to metaphor taken by a number of later writers, including Michael Polanyi and Nelson Goodman.

Bühler's clarification of how language works involved comparing language with non-linguistic representational systems. This is another mark of its originality which Innis discusses in some detail. The comparison of the flow of images in (silent) cinematography is an illuminating parallel which Bühler used to throw light upon such topics as anaphora and narration. The way Bühler exploited the analysis of the film theorist Béla Balázs here is both an exemplary and a prophetic instance of how fruitful a semiological framework for language studies might be.

More could and should have been said about Bühler's brief but crucial critique of Saussure. For Bühler saw the importance and implications of some of Saussure's observations probably more clearly than Saussure

did himself, and he tried to distinguish between what was sound in the *Cours de linguistique générale* and what Saussure had been tempted to say, as Bühler put it, "in his weak moments". It is a pity that Innis misses the opportunity of an exegesis of the opening sentence of the "Axiomatization" paper, where three eminently Saussurean themes are immediately introduced: (i) that every language is a system of signs, (ii) that the sounds of language are posited by the speaker as signs and received by the hearer as signs, and (iii) that the phenomenon of language arises as the mediator between individuals in the exchange of signs. Whereas Saussure saw languages as a centrally important class of semiotic systems, Bühler in this first sentence already goes much further. For him, these three theses offer ways in which "we can begin to speak about language". In other words, he sees the point that Saussurean semiology is not itself a science, but rather the systematization of a certain essential mode of discourse about language.

It is unfortunate that Innis takes his Saussure quotations from the Baskin translation of the *Cours de linguistique générale*, where Saussure's essential theoretical distinctions are blurred by rendering *la langue* simply as *language* (with no accompanying definite or indefinite article). Thus, for example, Innis represents Bühler's understanding of Saussure's position as being the following: "from the very outset we must put both feet on the ground of language and use language as the norm of all the other manifestations of speech". Here *speech* translates Saussure's *parole*. However, to make confusion doubly sure, Innis then cites Bühler's own dual rendering of Saussure's *langue* as (i) *speech capability* and (ii) *actual human speech*.

What is important is that Bühler *qua* psychologist rejected the false psychologizing implicit in Saussure's

theory: in particular, the insistence that *la langue* exists somewhere inside people's heads, and the notion that it essentially involves associations between "sound" images and "meanings". Bühler's criticisms are just as pertinent to the modern fashion for talking about languages as systems of "internalized rules" linking "phonetic representations" to "semantic representations".

This brings us, finally, to what is perhaps the most disappointing feature of Innis's essay: his vague concluding remarks to the effect that Bühler's approach to language may later all turn out to be compatible with Chomsky's. Innis is clearly uneasy about a "certain affinity" between Bühler's position and that of the American structuralism dismissed by Chomsky and his school as untenable. For Innis, this "affinity" appears to cast an awkward doubt over Bühler's reputation as a linguistic theorist and may even, one supposes, preclude ultimate canonization as an honorable precursor of generative linguistics. This is a worry that puts the cart before the horse. For the plain fact is that already in the 1930s Bühler had a far clearer concept of the essential creativity of language and the absurdity of representing languages as fixed codes than either Saussure or Saussure's latter-day transformationalist successors. In Bühler's view, as Innis pertinently remarks, what is abundantly clear is that "language was not a form of abstract algebra". Are we to take that as a criticism?

Edward Arnold have recently published a collection of eighteen essays to mark the sixtieth birthday of F. R. Palmer. *Linguistic Controversies*, edited by David Crystal (257pp, £18.50, 0 7131 6349 6) is divided into five sections: "General Issues", "Phonetics", "Phonology", "Psycholinguistics" and "Applications". The book also contains a bibliography of Palmer's published work.

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440pp. Edward Arnold. £24.
0 7151 6320 H

It is currently fashionable to argue that in the seventeenth-century Parliament was not the champion of parliamentary liberty and constitutional monarchy depicted by Whig historians, but a weak and ineffectual assembly obsessed by local interests and rivalries and unconcerned with ideological or political goals. Elizabethan and early Stuart Parliaments, it has been pointed out, even failed to exploit their traditional control over the financial supply to force redress of grievances. In the light of such evidence, some historians have concluded that the Civil War could not have been brought about by structural *disfigurement* nor by the activities of a radical "opposition", but that conflict was precipitated by the Court's adoption of a new anti-puritan religious creed, high church Arminianism. This new creed, it has been said, amounted to a religious "revolution", which met with almost unanimous opposition from the nation. The unanimity of the opposition of the King lasted, we are told, almost until the autumn of 1641.

Aware of these new investigations, Anthony Fletcher has not concerned himself directly with some of their implications. This has had the effect of leaving unexplained certain elements in the story which this scholarly and valuable book tells. First he narrates the events of the conflict between the King and Parliament which began on the floor of the Commons in 1640 and in less than two years had turned into armed conflict of the counties; then he considers the preparation for war and its progress in the localities down to 1643. He tells the story for the most part with a minimum of comment or asides, and reveals a Parliament very different in temper from earlier ones. Here was a body that was radical, aggressive and persistent in its pursuit of Charles and his ministers. It was guided by strong leadership from the floor. It was not the unanimous body described in other recent accounts: events in and out of the House were far too complex for that.

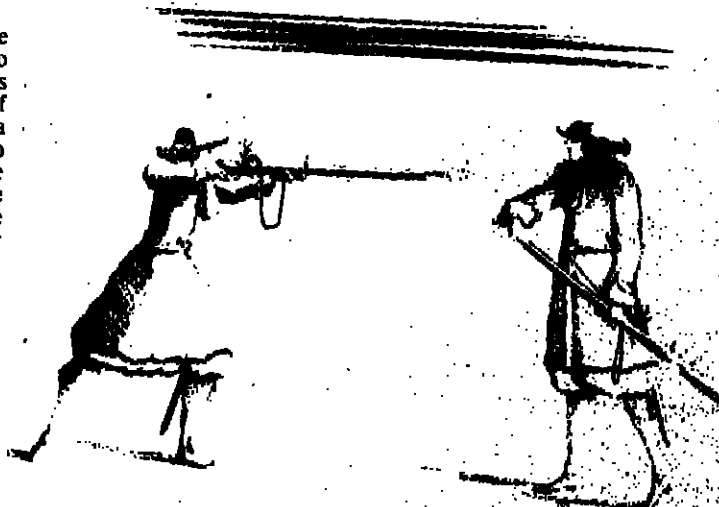
There were obvious divisions of opinion in Parliament right from the start, despite the traditional reluctance of members to admit to them. S. R. Gardiner exaggerated the unity of the first session, which lasted from November 1640 to August 1641. Pym's efforts to organize it, according to Mr Fletcher, resulted in a prolonged wrestling match: the House of Commons was even more difficult to control before August 1641 than it was in the later session. Anyone who has read the unprinted diaries of the Long Parliament will be aware of these divisions, but this book is the first to reveal in print their extent. There were strongly conflicting views in the House on nearly all major matters of debate: the Root and Branch petition, the proposal to give Parliament a negative control over the choice of King's ministers, the Triennial Bill and the various plans (some first aired as early as the spring of 1641) for taking the militia out of the hands of the crown. Although not quoted for this purpose by the author, the so-called "unanimous" Acts for the abolition of the Court of High Commission and of Star Chamber began as measures to reform those institutions, but by sleight-of-hand, according to Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, were suddenly and unexpectedly transformed into more radical Acts for abolition.

It is difficult to convey the wealth of incident with which Fletcher illustrates these events. He is particularly sure-footed in showing the pressures which brought about the attainment of Strafford. At these debates, little more than half the House of Commons was present. Time and again, the managers were outmanoeuvred by the Earl's supporters. Some, like Edward Hyde, spoke against Strafford in the vain hope that collaboration might

eventually bring a reprieve. Arthur Capel later attributed his own similar action to "the base fear of a prevailing party". The customs farmer Alderman Sir Henry Garway may have hoped by his evidence against the Earl to ward off the charge of delinquency against himself. Fifty-eight MPs supported Strafford at the end. The majority for the attainder in the Lords was only eleven, a somewhat pyrrhic victory achieved after intense and well organized pressure had been extended in the London streets and around the Palace of Westminster.

Speed, which had been the essence of the attack on Strafford, also characterized the passage of Pym's legislative programme. A succession of measures went rapidly through a House unused in the past thirty years to the passing of important legislative measures. One of the more radical, the proposed negative control over the King's ministers, was partly dropped or at least modified by Pym in May 1641 when he snuffed opposition, but was Remonstrance in November 1641 in the Irish rebellion. There was no control of the House and that that man was not the right hand of Charles. Even before the House assembled Pym's eminence was acknowledged. Sir Symonds D'Ewes, for example, wrote to him before the opening of Parliament excusing himself for missing the first week of the session. Pym also showed from the parliamentary leader of the middle that he would demonstrate again in 1642 and 1643: he revealed his *politique* temperament when he shelved the controversial Bill to reform the Church in June 1641 in order to unite the Houses on the more pressing political task of securing the exclusion of the Bishops from the House of Lords. The desire of Pym and other leading figures to soft-pedal on religious change seems to support the views expressed by contemporaries such as Oliver Cromwell, John Corbet and others that forms of ecclesiastical government at any rate were not the

first thing contended for in these turbulent years, and to give substance too to Clarendon's remark that Pym against the Church "that characterized some of his colleagues". Although Fletcher does not sit in judgment on men and events, he is explicit about one of the methods used by Pym and the leaders to win parliamentary support: the exploitation of the plots, both papist and royal, which were exploited by Pym and his associates going back to at least 1637. The collaboration with the City of London and the divisions within that body are very briefly touched upon: it is a pity that Fletcher omits, for example, the crucial conflict over the



An illustration of military principles from the first edition of Francesco Marzotti's *Precetti Militari*, 1670. One of several books on warfare in the Seventeenth Century held at Sotheby's on Tuesday June 15.

which increasingly frightened the two Houses. He is right to stress the enormous effect which these "fears" exercised in retaining their support for policies which they might never in other circumstances have dreamed of supporting. Indeed the gulf in political opinion from time to time between the leaders and the rank-and-file could be explored further: exactly how far ahead of his colleagues were Pym and the leadership during these tense months, and on which issues?

Other elements in the political scene

election of Sheriffs in June 1641, the outcome of which would in part determine who controlled the streets of the city and its juries in the fateful days ahead. There is no explanation of the City's rapid politicization in 1641. A future edition might note that the Lord Mayor in 1640-41 was not Sir Henry Garway but Sir Edmund Wright.

In his conclusion, Fletcher points to the paradoxical nature of these astonishing events. Why did men who were conservative by temperament, who genuinely wished to preserve the

enviable triumphs. The chief minister had been beheaded; most of the others had fled abroad, or had been imprisoned, or were still being denounced by one or more of the government. The collapse of central Westminster Hall and Whitehall, and the dispersal of the crowds, in October 1641 to January 1642 in 1642 the continuation of this, which Coates had prepared before his death, has been completed.

"Any calculation from this that a complete D'Ewes may be available in the next millennium but one would be unjust. The diary-editing industry, produced some admirable volumes for the earlier parliaments of the century, and its output seems to be increasing. D'Ewes' other than D'Ewes were where they had essential additions; each successive day, when D'Ewes left the House (sometimes to buy with a friend, often to the eastern languages) he often referred to the journal of John Moore. The two last Framlingham Cawley, Roger Hill, and Thomas Peyton, generally more speciously and, with welcome defiance of the pedants, in modernized spelling. These two months, from the fiasco of Charles's attempted arrest of the 'five members' to the passing without his assent of the measure to take control of the militia, are often picked out as inevitable though the same is said of many earlier crises. None of the diarists gives an impression of decisive doubt, middle, and a moderate amount of hypocrisy. Parliament in the past year had experienced some

Day by day parliament was taking control of munitions, and garrisons and money.

Behind the long discussions about Hull, the Tower of London, and the guarding of parliament, we can see the differences of outlook. There were still no royalists or parliamentarians: there were those for whom the peace of the kingdom was more important than further opposition, and those who believed that the king must be deprived of military power before he could use it against parliament. D'Ewes, as Anthony Fletcher's recent study puts it, was "the weather-vane of moderate opinion" and his journal became a record of "the mood and fortunes of the incipient peace party". Moore was a future regicide.

But apart from D'Ewes's devotion to his own speeches the differences in selection and emphasis are less apparent than the unexplained gaps in each that the other reveals. Neither offers much comment on the managing group surrounding Pym that is supposed to have established its domination, nor on how far a stable pattern of voting had arisen. They do show, in the joint picture of the ordinary MPs' day, how parliament was moving towards its brief experience of true government. In what the editors call a "bewildering maze" of committees, the two Houses were taking over more and more of the functions of the king's Council and the Exchequer. In these two months D'Ewes and Moore each sat on a score of committees, men like Pym and Holles on far more. Gradually the parliamentary administrators who ran the country during the war were developing their methods. It was a hard life, and we can appreciate the joy of D'Ewes when in the Hall one afternoon he found not a tumult but a feast someone had prepared for the lords and commons. "We had great cheer."

SOCIAL STUDIES

Against the establishment

G. M. Carstairs

ROBERT CASTEL, FRANÇOISE CASTEL and ANNE LOVELL

The Psychiatric Society
280pp. Columbia University Press: £12.40.
0 231 05244 8

In multi-authored works of non-fiction it is customary for the authors to share their several contributions and their special fields of interest. This practice has not been followed in *The Psychiatric Society*. The reader has to do his own detective work in order to discover that Robert Castel is a professor of sociology at the University of Paris VIII, while Françoise Castel is a psychiatrist at the "Center Hospital de Corbeil-Essonne" and Anne Lovell is a fellow at the psychiatric epidemiology program at Columbia University. This information is not given in the text, but on the dust-cover, which informs us that Robert Castel is also the author of *L'ordre psychiatrique* (1973) and *Le psychiatrie* (1976). The unsigned, and presumably triple-authored, preface to the original French edition tells us: "This book might have been entitled *Travels in America*, for in one respect it is a report of a journey. Two years ago, working out of three main centers: San Francisco, New York and Boston . . . Our predominant feeling on returning to France was one of perplexity. This no doubt refers to Robert and Françoise Castel, although two other permutations are not excluded. The preface goes on: "One of us is an American, Anne Lovell founded a free clinic in 1970 and later took part, as a board member of the Louisiana American Civil Liberties Union and of various community organizations in the efforts to reform mental hospitals and prisons that grew out of the civil rights struggles of the nineteen-sixties throughout the United States."

The reader is still left wondering what were the respective contributions of the three authors. They imply, though they nowhere explicitly state, that they are of one mind in their hostility towards the psychiatric establishment of which one of them is a (presumably reluctant) staff member. Their history of the rise of psychiatry in the United States to the point where, in their view, it moulds American society as much as do the Pentagon and the State Department, is a sustained exercise in anti-psychiatry. Like the majority of writers in this vein they argue that all contemporary social institutions are inherently repressive: only those of the counter-culture are sincere, uncondemned towards social deviants and exempt from the desire to impose social controls upon those who turn to them for help. To put it as bluntly as this implies that they share a paranoid perception of the social organization of mental health care. It is true that they frequently appear to do just that: for example, at the end of their chapter on "The psychologization of differences" they conclude a discussion of the uses of behavioural modification with this statement: "As long as an authoritarian repression of nonconformist behaviour was carried on in the name of an openly repressive ideology, what was at stake politically was clear. But when repression is carried out in the guise of treatment directed to the victims of society, there is a temptation to believe in the good intentions of those offering to provide services."

This is a temptation against which the authors are stoutly armed; but to do them justice they are also candid in describing how rapidly experiments in alternative ways of helping handicapped, immobilized and speechless. A new drug on the market, which gave him some control over his "jeering, jerky spasms", a "unicorn" stick attached to his forehead, and the help of his mother, enabled him at last to get to grips with the previously insoluble problem of communication. Now, four years later, he uses a micro-computer, and his output to date consists of stories, poems, plays and the short third-person autobiography "First

there was a founding father, Benjamin Rush, who shared in the role that legend attributes to Pinel and Tuke" - but Benjamin Rush is better known as one of those who signed the Declaration of Independence than for his contributions to psychiatry; and the influence of Pinel and Tuke in humanizing the care of the mentally ill was based on historical records of their accomplishments at the Bicêtre in Paris and the Retreat in York, not merely on their "legends".

The authors are also guilty of exaggeration in stating that a "rage for psychoanalysis swept the United States" following Freud's lectures at Clark University in 1909. They go on to point out that the first fifteen members of the New York Psychoanalytic Society were all doctors, "graduates of the leading schools in America or had been trained abroad (nine had been born outside of the United States, and seven of these were Jews)". It is difficult to make out which of these attributes is the most heinous - to be doctors, aliens or Jews. The fact remains that for three decades after Freud's visit to Boston psychoanalysts remained on the fringe of medical teaching. Their numbers grew during the 1930s because several leading analysts came to the United States to escape from Hitler, but it was only after 1945 that psychoanalytic training became a virtual prerequisite of career advancement for psychiatrists in the leading medical schools and in private practice.

A similar oversimplification is apparent in the assertion that the United States have turned the task of social integration into a merely technical matter, an applied technology: "American technicians have opened up new frontiers in the control and standardization of human beings." This is a partial truth; it needs to be qualified by recalling that few other societies have been so active in encouraging their citizens to explore and realize their innate potential.

Repeatedly, during their accounts of changes in popular opinion towards analytic psychotherapy and towards the very different worlds of the State Hospitals and the Community Mental Health Centers, the authors seem to be on the verge of giving some credit for a measure of enlightenment, even of concern for their patients, to a few rare psychiatrists such as Adolph Meyer and William A. White - only to choke back this impulse with a timely qualification: that Meyer and White were at once psychiatrists, psychoanalysts and hygienists and thereby less tainted than their colleagues. They also hold it against White that he was a former medical superintendent of St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, which in 1959 inspired Erving Goffman's description of the "total institution". In devious language the author (and here it must surely be the writer of *Le Psychiatrie* who is at the helm) accuses both White and Meyer of encouraging a "filtration" between psychoanalysis and behaviourism in 1910 - "the date when the various manipulative techniques for dealing with human problems encountered one another".

When Christopher Nolan writes in his autobiography (*Dam-Burst of Dreams*, 128pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £3.95, 0 297 77978 8) of "brilliant, bright, boiling words poured into his mind" he is describing the sense of elation which accompanied his discovery of a means of expression. Years of pent-up feelings had suddenly found an outlet - a very productive one. For it became clear, with the first lines he typed laboriously on his typewriter, that Christopher Nolan had been nurturing a rare literary talent.

He was eleven at the time, severely handicapped, immobilized and speechless. A new drug on the market, which gave him some control over his "jeering, jerky spasms", a "unicorn" stick attached to his forehead, and the help of his mother, enabled him at last to get to grips with the previously insoluble problem of communication.

Now, four years later, he uses a micro-computer, and his output to date consists of stories, poems, plays and the short third-person autobiography "First

As a history of the struggle between the psychiatric establishment and the generous intentions which have inspired a series of Alternatives to Psychiatry, this book is flawed by its apparent conviction that such laudable enterprises have been deliberately thwarted by evil forces - and that (again, about 1909) "a capitalist notion of rationality came to dominate all areas of life".

There are interesting accounts of fluctuating fashions in psychiatric care, but these lose credibility because of the authors' dogmatic ideological judgments. Even when the supposed arch-enemies of humane care - doctors on the staff of the National Institute of Mental Health, and members of the American Psychiatric Association - have publicly admitted grave errors in some officially approved treatment programmes - these admissions are dismissed as being merely a tactic for re-asserting their "benign" control.

Not everything in the book is condemnatory. The story of the short-lived, ill-fated free clinics in San Francisco and Boston is here sympathetically told (perhaps by Anne Lovell?). The struggles of patients' groups are also well described, as are the occasions on which the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for Mental Health have come to their aid. The progress of the Gay and Feminist movements towards greater social acceptance of their members' rights is also belligerently supported; but the book ends (where it has never for long left off) with extravagant assertions, such as that there is little real difference between psychiatrists and the KGB, and that to all the groups and agencies who make their living in the practice of "Psychoanalysis" owes the most highly diversified and tightly knit network of social control that exists anywhere in the world."

In a lengthy peroration the authors blame psychoanalysis and the mental health movement for having presumed to know what constitutes mental health, and to guide mentally healthy people to become even healthier; but they also go much further than this, blaming every individual and every institution in a free enterprise, capitalist society for being, either deliberately or passively, agents for the perpetuation of that society. Ultimately, therefore, every organized endeavour to help the mentally disturbed is condemned, just as are all individual therapeutic intentions. Their training is dismissed as being merely skills "at manipulating people to accept the constraints of society." Their conclusion: "One must know that nobody is exempt from the growing importance of social controls before one can prepare to work against them by mapping out and hopefully adding to the last remaining territory not yet fallen: under the sway of the old guardians of law and order and the new engineers of the mind."

Clearly, this is not merely a condemnation of all existing services for mental health care, but something much more ambitious: it is an anarchist manifesto for a society free of all social controls.

poignantly and accurately entitled "A Mummy Encumbrance". Christopher Nolan's work is characterized by flamboyance, alliteration, and a wild originality of approach. His descriptive phrases are striking and sometimes felicitous: "zany, bonny December", "the dolorous days of death". He can rise to irony, as when he describes himself in these terms: "a frightening handicap, a foolish facial expression and a doubtful public". He displays a sure feeling for the vivid and the dramatic: "It storms his sad-looking Mam and his damned-angry Dad" - his stage direction refers to an interesting moment in one of his plays, when a couple of outraged parents are about to confront their delinquent son ("Look smart and feverishly give an honest account of your activities at school yesterday", it goes on). The poems at present have something of a hit-or-miss quality about them, but there are indications that this will be rectified when greater discipline succeeds the heady access of creativity.

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Thinking polaristically

David Trotter

JOHN BURT FOSTER

Heirs to Dionysus: A Nietzschean Current in Literary Modernism
474pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £19.30.
0 691 06480 6

It is not immediately apparent whether the Nietzschean "current" envisaged by *Heirs to Dionysus* is electric or fluvial. This current has an "energizing" and even "vivifying" effect. People receive "shocks of recognition". Its guardian deity, Dionysus, proves an "electrifying figure". Yet it also produces "swirls and eddies". And no sooner have we got that one straight than the philosopher's influence starts to behave like "an unstable atom throwing off fragments in all directions". The cover-picture (a muddle of blobs and squirts) shows a "lambda-induced bubble chamber event" and is "intended to illustrate the nature of Nietzsche's impact on the modernists".

No such excitability disturbs the sober tone of the book, or its sobering length, or its monumental regard for the protocol as well as the substance of scholarship. Indeed, the argument unfolds with so imperious and ponderous a lucidity that one sometimes wonders whether the pages on which Foster says what he's going to do, or what a critic ought to do, or what the reader should take care not to do, will outweigh the pages on which anything is actually done. In this respect, it seems a tribute less to *gay science* than to the exaggeratedly prudent pleasures of Nietzsche's mentor, the philologist Ritschl, who used to leave banknotes between the pages of books so that he would be pleasantly surprised when he came to reread them. Students borrowing one of the books would assume that Ritschl was offering them a discreet loan.

A more ruthless editor might perhaps have dismantled some of these rhetorical bulwarks and gargoyles, and allowed us a clearer sight of what is in fact a credible contribution to an important and fascinating subject. Setting out originally to redefine Nietzsche's influence on modernism, and thus modernism itself, Foster came across a "narrower and less diffuse phenomenon", an "identifiable group" of writers (Gide, Mann, Lawrence, Malraux) who had responded directly to identifiable Nietzschean themes. His book offers an extended analysis of work by these four men. Its "resolute empiricism" will, he hopes, provoke us into further thought about the nature of Nietzsche's influence and about the nature of modernist fiction.

Foster makes two main points about that influence. First, he argues against Brich Heller's view of Nietzsche as the Aquinas of the age, the philosopher who provided an intellectual framework within which literary subjects might develop. Between Nietzsche and his heirs there is not only a relation of idea to image, but also a relation of idea to idea, of image to image, and of image to idea. Secondly, he suggests that writers often "begin by feeling an intense identification with Nietzsche but later discover that it threatens their sense of artistic integrity and originality". The model becomes a rival.

Foster's exposition of the ideas and images his chosen writers were imitating or reworking is painstaking and helpful. The heirs to Dionysus were heirs above all to that fondness for dunnit or "polaristic thinking" (as Foster puts it) exemplified not only by the opposition between Apollo and Dionysus in the early *Birth of Tragedy*, but also by such later pairings as master and slave or sickness and health. These are non-dialectical dualisms, in which each term is affirmative and exists in its own right rather than as a negation of the other. Nietzsche, of course, continued throughout his career to extend and modify his image of Dionysus. Foster is therefore able to discuss a wide range of issues without losing sight of Dionysus, issues such as the psychology of creativity and inadequacy, cultural crisis and the will to power. *The Birth of Tragedy* may have held a particular fascination for

modernist writers, but like us they were looking back down the entire career of a philosopher who concluded his autobiography with the motto "Dionysus versus the Crucified". Foster's account of that career is selective, the principle of selection being what his chosen novelists made out of the philosopher; or rather what he believes them to have made out of the philosopher. It doesn't include the man obsessed by the relativity of interpretation and by the precarious relation between language and meaning. It doesn't include the man who spoke in an early letter of his passion for writing:

Above all, a few gay spirits in my own style must once more be unchained; I must learn to play on them as on a keyboard, but not only pieces I have learnt by heart - no - but also free fantasies, as free as possible, yet still always logical and beautiful.

"Do I still have to say," he wrote twenty years later in *Twilight of the Idols*, "that one has to be able to dance with the pen - that writing has to be learned? - But at this point I should become a complete enigma to German readers. . . . And not only German readers."

But it is the exponent of immorality and polaristic thinking whose presence in modernist fiction Foster seeks to establish. The very plot of *The Immoralist* and *Death in Venice* were shaped, he argues, by Nietzschean polarities. Both Michel and Aschenbach "turn away from worlds distorted by abstraction and theory only to discover that the Dionysus Nietzsche had invoked as his guide to a better, 'tragic' culture is in reality a savage god". Their development reverses the pattern of Greek culture, which had moved from an influx of the Dionysian through a tragic age to the triumph of theory. Gide and Mann thus accept Nietzsche's challenge to imagine "the gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit in our modern world", but for them that spirit is compulsive and nihilistic.

This is a good chapter, alert to detail, and to Mann's relatively more subtle handling of Nietzschean themes. At the time of *The Immoralist*, Gide was a little too close to Nietzsche for comfort; he spoke of a "charming fatality" which had led him to visit places the philosopher had passed through, and to spend a winter in Siles-Maria. (In the novel itself, curiously enough, it is the Nietzschean Ménagerie who follows in Michel's footsteps to Siles-Maria.) Mann's response was more complex and more assured, as Foster shows. There is further evidence for his argument in the way the painted faces of Zarathustra's "men of the present" - "Written over with the signs of the past and these signs overwritten with new signs" - reappear metaphorically in Michel's desire to peel off the mass of acquired knowledge which covers his mind "like a mask of paint"; but enter Mann's characterization: the old man in the boat to Venice; Aschenbach's visit to the "artist in cosmetic".

Foster begins his chapter on *Women in Love* by remarking on "the engagement with Nietzsche evident in its systematic use of imagery". His comments on the imagery are often perceptive, but acknowledge that the engagement of image with source is sometimes less than wholehearted. He has most success in relating the speculations of Birkin in "Mino" to Zarathustra's stance on the cross-Channel ferry, where he feels that the world has been torn in two and that he is "plunging like an unlit star through the inextinguishable fire". Even so, it is hard not to echo Ursula's riposte to Birkin: "I don't trust you when you drag in the stars."

Foster argues that the themes of cultural crisis and life-affirmation in the novel have "a substantial Nietzschean component"; "Gide's story dramatizes the issue of crisis in its two phases of decadence and nihilism, and Birkin's story examines the borderline situation that looks towards 'renewal'." It would have been hard for someone of Lawrence's generation

to write about decadence and nihilism without drawing on Nietzsche. Lawrence certainly did, although for him Nietzsche was perhaps as much symptom as symptomatologist. Gide and Lawrence acknowledge the crisis of art and society, but to counter it they possess only "mocking imaginings of destruction", nihilistic fantasies about a man who "invented such a perfect explosive that it blew the earth in two". One recalls Nietzsche's claim that *Ecce Homo* "blasts, literally, the history of mankind in two - the highest superlative of dynamite. . . ."

The comparisons Foster offers between the roles of Birkin and Zarathustra seem more plausible in outline than in detail. Even so, an extensive familiarity with Nietzsche's work has helped him to write well, on the whole, about Lawrence. Whether the same could be said of his chapter on Malraux, I don't feel competent to judge. There the argument turns on the sociological implications of Nietzschean polarities, on the psychology of inadequacy, and on the philosopher's madness.

The last novel considered is *Doctor Faustus*, "product of an imagination that was saturated with Nietzsche and his writings", and surely one of the most absorbing tributes literature has ever paid to philosophy. Mann freely acknowledged that his hero, Adrian Leverkühn, was modelled in part on Nietzsche; so the question here is not the degree of influence, but its kind and its reasons. Foster illuminates the connection between Leverkühn and the character sketches of "theoretical man" in *The Birth of Tragedy* and elsewhere. He also stresses the way Mann plays off narrow and limiting versions of Nietzsche's political thought developed in Germany after the philosopher's death against its broader possibilities.

Here too Foster proves a competent critic. Overall, there can be no doubt that his European perspective has brought into the argument emphases and connections which might otherwise have remained hidden. But he has also succeeded in identifying a particular "current" among twentieth-century novelists, and thus altered our understanding of modernism?

In his concluding chapter, Foster offers this current as an alternative within modernism to the tradition he believes to have been defined by Harry Levin's 1941 book on Joyce, a tradition committed to "innovative choices in artistic method and subject matter". Foster's modernists were less concerned with formal innovation than with the development of a "world-view", an effort which involved assimilating and revising Nietzschean themes. They looked, he claims, to the advocate of aesthetic naturalism rather than to the man who unchained free fantasies, the man who insisted on the oblique relation of language to meaning. I believe, on the contrary, that Mann at least was less immune to free fantasies and scepticism about the status of language than Foster allows. Mann read Levin's book on Joyce while he was working on *Doctor Faustus* and he commented on the striking appropriateness to his own work of its definitions of modernism.

Foster argues that in terms of form and style *Doctor Faustus* owes virtually nothing to Nietzsche. But it seems to me that Nietzsche's acute sense of the shifting and oblique nature of language does provoke Mann to thought. Consider, for example, the letter in which Leverkühn describes to Zeitblom his visit to a brothel: "What Zeitblom notices about the letter is the way it switches from a lucid modern style into a parody of Old German when the adventure is recounted, and then back again at the end. Leverkühn has to guard himself against his perception of the event by slipping into archaic diction. Was Mann remembering the letter Nietzsche wrote to Franz Overbeck on September 18, 1887? This letter begins in German with commonplace remarks and then suddenly diverges into Latin as Nietzsche reveals to Overbeck the extremity of his despair, and his longing for death. He too had to find a language which would protect him from his thoughts."

A year before his breakdown Nietzsche observed that no review of his work had yet characterized him as Dionysian pessimist or as immoralist or as writer. If we are to assess his impact on modern literature, we must meet him in all these rôles.

Zeitblom, Mann's narrator, finds it difficult to convey the sinister and tumultuous meaning of Leverkühn's life. His words seem to arrive too early or too late; either they precede meaning, or they struggle after. Sometimes he gets ahead of his story, referring to characters who have not yet appeared; these "too empty, too early names" must wait entire chapters before they are filled with meaning. At the same time, his hand shakes constantly as he writes, limping behind his train of thought. These and other narrative difficulties reproduce Leverkühn's position as an "archaic revolutionary": his knowledge of musical theory is premature, acquired too early in his life; and yet in the history of music he is too late, condemned to parody.

The most striking example of the difficulties of expression, however, is not Zeitblom but Leverkühn's first mentor, Kretzschmar. Kretzschmar is afflicted by a stutter of a particularly developed kind: "tragic, because he was a man gifted with great and urgent riches of thought, passionately addicted to giving out information". He is a brilliant lecturer, but his speech often jams completely when hovering over some potent insight, such as the relation between death and artistic objectivity. Language comes behind, too late for the thought in its fullness. It has been suggested that the spelling of his name (usually anglicized as Kretschmar) alludes to Nietzsche. Nietzsche also had a friend called Kretzschmar, who was a disciple of Schopenhauer and committed suicide in 1867. In any case, stammering is a Nietzschean image for the difficulties of expression. He once remarked that the author of *The Birth of Tragedy* had appeared to be "stammering out laborious, arbitrary phrases in an alien tongue". "And, indeed, this 'new soul' should have sung, not spoken," Zarathustra expects to "hobble and stutter" like a poet.

In his most thorough account of language, "On Truth and Falsehood in an Extra-Moral Sense" (written 1873, published 1903), Nietzsche said that the relation between mind and reality demanded "a sort of halting, stammering translation into an entirely foreign language". He compared language itself to Chladni's figures, geometric patterns produced by scraping the bow of a violin against the edge of a board covered with fine sand. The indirect relation between the pattern produced and the tone of the note is comparable to the indirect relation between language and meaning.

Mann read Nietzsche's writings of the early 1870s while working on *Doctor Faustus*, so he might have known this essay (Foster considers it irrelevant). Chladni's figures is one of the tricks Mr Leverkühn uses to keep Adrian and Serenus happy; it is even shown to Kretzschmar. Does Nietzsche's vivid concern with the difficulties of expression enter Mann's novel along with the image? It seems to me a question worth asking, even if the answer is far from clear.

Nor should this kind of question be restricted to Mann. In *Time and Western Man* Wyndham Lewis pointed out that "the dynamical - or what Nietzsche called the Dionysian, and which he professed - is a relation, something that happens, between two or more opposites, when they meet in their pyrrhic encounters". Lewis's early experiments in prose (*The Enemy of the Stars*, *Tarr*, *The Wild Body*) had all involved such pyrrhic encounters: "polaristic thinking", indeed. But he used his dionysian theme less as the basis of a "world-view" than as the hammer of form and genre. Here Nietzsche provokes the modernist disturbance of form, those "innovative choices in artistic method and subject matter". What sanctioned such experiments was Lewis's response to the "unconcerned, mocking, violent" tone of Nietzsche's work.

A year before his breakdown Nietzsche observed that no review of his work had yet characterized him as Dionysian pessimist or as immoralist or as writer. If we are to assess his impact on modern literature, we must meet him in all these rôles.

AFRICA

J. DESMOND CLARK (Editor)
The Cambridge History of Africa
Volume 1. From the Earliest Times to c.500 BC
1157pp. Cambridge University Press.
£48.
0 521 22215 X

At last the long-awaited Volume One of the *Cambridge History of Africa* is out, four years after Volume Two and five years after Volume Three. It follows the familiar format of the Cambridge Histories, in comprising a fat volume containing a dozen monographs, many of them the size of small books in themselves, written by leading scholars in their field. The "about" in the sub-title of "From the Earliest Times to c. 500 BC" is important, as it is an indication of the difficulty of applying precise periodization to a continent whose history ran very differently in different parts of it. At this cut-off date part of the continent had seen three thousand years of the evolution of one of the major "ancient civilizations" of the Old World, while another part continued to see hunting, gathering and fishing ways of life organized in small-scale social units without even the techniques of pottery or metallurgy.

This immediately highlights the formidable difficulties of trying to produce a volume covering the history of the continent up to 500 BC. Because Africa is vast and contains within it such geographical, historical and cultural variety, it is extremely difficult to know how best to divide up a general history of all but its last two-and-a-half millennia: whether by area, by period or by topic. Because no one individual can be expected to encompass the whole at the level of detail aimed at, inevitably there are some unevennesses, some overlaps and some inconsistencies. A particular kind of unevenness arises out of the editor's difficulty in persuading all his contributors to submit their promised chapters by the agreed deadline, a problem familiar to anyone who has tried to edit a cooperative work. Those who fail to meet the deadline by a wide margin cause the writings of the earlier contributors to become out-of-date before they are printed. So it is in this volume, some chapters have references up to 1980, others nothing after 1976.

Another difficulty stems from the fact that, while Africa may be a geographical entity on a map of the world, in other respects it is an abstraction. The history of ancient Egypt cannot be treated in isolation from the rest of the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean; and "Africa" has never been and never will be a single ecological or cultural unit. The "idea of Africa", however, does have a certain reality as an emotional image, as a focus for certain sets of powerful feelings. Since this is so, it is not likely that the writing of African history will escape the effect of such emotions. All perceptions are conditioned by the location - geographical, historical, cultural, emotional - of the observer. This is the basis both of the theory of relativity and of the writing of history. Few historians would nowadays pretend to be able to write completely objectively, even if they claim to avoid the worst excesses of the Whig, Marxist or any other "view" of history, or to be justified by their use of a new method of analysis which can give fresh insights. The writings of history are not tape-recordings of things-as-they-happened, they are expressions of the writers' own attitudes to their present, of how they see the world, using the partial and selected evidences of the past. That is why history is re-written in each generation. One sees partly what one wants to see, partly what one has a frame of interpretation to enable one to see. The writing of history is affected both by the emotional attitudes of the writer, often unrecognized, as well as by his more theoretical considerations about the nature of historical causation.

Because of folk-memories of the slave-trade, because of the more recent colonial experience, but above all because in part of the continent blacks are still treated as less than human and accorded a third-class status, "Africa" has become a symbol of black aspirations and a focus for the rebuttal of allegations concerning their supposed inferiority in the human family.

From hominids to pharaohs

C. Thurstan Shaw

publication of the particular volume under review makes the claim in its preface to be "the first relatively complete and authoritative overview of African prehistory" technically inaccurate, since the first two Unesco volumes were published in 1981 and reviewed in the TLS on March 20, 1981.

On the whole the Cambridge volume is incomparably better than the Unesco. It is more scholarly, it is more up-to-date, and it has been better edited. Generalizations about works of multiple authorship are always difficult, but it would not be unfair to say that in our imagined scale of attitude and standpoint running from extreme Eurocentrism to the ardent demonstration of African achievement, many of the authors in the Unesco volumes must rank high towards the latter end of that scale, sometimes to the detriment of more objective judgment. The Cambridge volume would be placed pretty much in the middle of the scale. Most of the archaeologists contributing feel

Ancient Egypt but only eight others for the prehistory of the rest of the continent. This means that in a number of cases they are expected to give an account for the whole continent, or a major part of it, of a particular period or topic; the amount of data and research results available are such that in some cases, this is making excessive demands, and the narrower specialists will inevitably note errors and omissions in their particular sphere. Overlap between authors is defended in the preface, and there seems to have been no editorial policy to try to reconcile inconsistencies, which is reasonable, but it would have been helpful if an editorial footnote could have cross-referenced these.

In such detailed reporting of archaeological evidence, there has to be a great deal of matter concerned with artifacts of one sort or another. For this, archaeologists have to use the terminology of their discipline, which they have developed to define their entities more precisely and in

sink-holes in an otherwise rather dry, treeless environment. Butzer comments on the fact that Plio-Pleistocene deposits with significant numbers of fossils are not known in the areas of broadleaf tropical forest, or even in the heavily wooded areas adjoining them. He might have added that the drainage pattern of Africa may also help to account for this distribution: a map plotting the inland drainage basins of the continent shows a large correspondence with the areas of evidence for early man.

One may remark in passing that if one takes a broad look at African prehistory, one can see a shift of importance from one area of the continent to another. During the Pliocene and Lower Pleistocene, development is confined to an area east of 25°E latitude; during the Middle and Upper Pleistocene northern Africa also comes into the picture; during the Holocene the focus of importance moves progressively into what is now the Sahara, the savannas to the south of it, the Lower Nile valley and the West African forest. What may be the reasons for these trends are worthy of attention.

The chapter by Clark Howell on the origins and evolution of the African hominids is a most valuable, up-to-date summary of our knowledge of the topic, and is far more detailed and definitive than the corresponding section in the Unesco volume. Naturally Howell's interpretations of the data do not always agree with those of other workers in the same field. He offers a useful discussion of the definition of *Homo*, although he seems to leave out of account Tobias's helpful concept of "mosaic evolution" (in which the prehuman ancestor did not suddenly cross a Rubicon to become man; rather, different human characteristics were acquired at different points in the evolution of the species). Howell comes down firmly against the "competitive exclusion principle" to assert that there was coexistence temporally, and even spatially, of at least two hominid taxa through a substantial span of Pliocene and Quaternary time, and he gives detailed evidence for this. At the end of his chapter he considers the origins of the African negro people and concludes that these still remain largely unknown - an ignorance usually attributed to the rarity of archaeological and human skeletal documentation from the forested and wooded areas of the equatorial reaches of the continent.

Glynis Isaac's chapter on the earliest archaeological traces gives a most valuable and detailed summary of the artifactual evidence, together with the patterns revealed, with a welcome emphasis that these are only the means to the end of reconstructing early behaviour - in which hunting, food-sharing, division of labour, a home base and tool-making can be viewed as a set of behaviours which have been fundamental to human differentiation. Dart's "osteodontokeratic culture" is regarded as dubious and unproven (compared with Balout's acceptance of it), and of the "type-fossil" model, in the Unesco volume, Isaac is inclined to see the "Developed Oldowan" as an "activity variant" of the Acheulian; in fact it has been called "Acheulian Type B by Klein and others. We do not understand the ending of the Acheulian, but there is no evidence for any catastrophic causation. Fire is recognized in the cold temperate zone from 500,000 ac but only from 200,000 ac in Africa; however, under tropical conditions of weathering, traces of fire are not likely to survive longer, so Africa may have had the use of fire before the "break-out" from Africa. To account for the differences between tool assemblages, Isaac considers the relative merits of the three models (not necessarily mutually exclusive) of parallel phylogeny, activity facies and random walk.

There is a comparable discussion in the succeeding chapter by Clark Howell on the cultures of the Middle Palaeolithic/Middle Stone Age, whether differences between industrial assemblages are due to

order to communicate with each other. A series of footnotes in the chapter on the Earlier Stone Age gives some help with the terminology of stone artifacts, but in his preface J. Desmond Clark says that in general no attempt has been made to provide an explanation of the terms involved, though suggesting where this can be found. Many historians of Africa find archaeological terminology trying, but this is because they have the wrong attitude to archaeology, regarding it as an "adjunct to history". Even if in the end it aims to contribute its own construction (not reconstructions) of the human story, it must be remembered that the nature of this raw material is fundamentally different from that of history, imposing upon it different constraints, different questions, different answers. Archaeology is a discipline in its own right, and if historians wish to make use of its concepts and entities they must learn the language, and learn to use it correctly - just as they would expect to have to do if they needed the concepts, entities and language of mathematics or physics.

Chapter One, by Karl Butzer, deals with the palaeogeography of the African continent, with a description of the environment of the early hominids in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. Both the robust and gracile australopithecines lived among the open vegetation of lake-shore-ines and deltaic plains, but gallery forests seem to have been favoured by the robust variety more than by the gracile. Not having lived in a volcanic area the Transvaal hominids do not have the benefit of radiometric dating, and chronology depends on comparisons of associated faunal assemblages. The "Taung juvenile" came from a deposit indicating fairly wet conditions in open country, but the majority of the other Transvaal hominid fossils come from breccias accumulated below limestone sink-holes; the hominids were probably victims of leopards using trees growing over these

limit of credibility - and sometimes beyond. This was only to be expected, as a reaction to the Eurocentric writing of African history which was common up to twenty years ago and which has still not disappeared. The most quoted example of this came from the pen of Reginald Professor of History at Oxford, who wrote: "Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none; there is only the history of the Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness . . . and darkness is not a subject of history." Hugh Trevor-Roper went on to give a warning against the uselessness of bothering with "the unwelcome gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe". However, it was an African historian who defended the butt of innumerable emotional insults by nationalist African historians, who see his viewpoint as motivated by purely racial prejudice, when, said Ochieng, the central problem of African history today is the continent's poverty, stemming from its backwardness in relation to other parts of the Old World. Nevertheless, Ochieng is exceptional among African historians, and one can place today's writing of African history on a kind of scale - with antiquating Eurocentrism (nowadays usually unconscious) at one end, and at the other the most extreme and exaggerated reactions against it.

We now have before us two cooperative attempts to produce a detailed general history of Africa, superseding the heroic efforts of those authors who have attempted to do it single-handed. The first is the *Cambridge History of Africa* and the second the *Unesco General History of Africa*, and it is impossible not to compare them. Although the Cambridge volumes began appearing before the Unesco ones, the delay in



From J. E. Alexander's *An Expedition of Discovery into the Interior of Africa (1838)* which is included in the exhibition "Scotland and Africa" at The National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh until September 30.

temporal patterning, discrete populations, or different activities. A detailed account of the period is given, region by region, and it is possible to see the differentiation of an increasing number of strategies for subsistence in an increasing number of different ecological situations. It is the period when modern man comes upon the scene: we have evidence for the intentional burial of the dead, and a number of innovations are made. One of these, the blunting of the back edge of a sharp blade (penknife fashion), appears as early in Africa as in Europe and was the foundation for making composite tools and the earliest forms of arrowhead.

The next two chapters are the first to divide the continent so that each considers less than the whole: the first by Philip Smith on the Late Palaeolithic of Northern Africa, and the second by David Phillipson on the Later Stone Age in sub-Saharan Africa. Both give a detailed account of the archaeological evidence, but the second author has the more difficult task in covering such a wide area with so much data. After 20,000 years there is more regional diversity all over the continent, perhaps connected with higher population densities and more differentiated patterns of ecological adaptation. Behavioural differences between sub-regions are difficult to explain (eg. ritual practices in connection with the dead and the living, and art for personal adornment, common in the Maghrib but rare in the Lower Nile valley); these differences are likely to have been due to different belief systems and methods of symbolic expression. The differences at this time north and south of the Mediterranean indicate that the inland sea was still much of a barrier. That North Africa was a "backward, refuge area" no longer fits the facts and is not an adequate explanation.

We cannot yet identify for certain those elements in North Africa which were of external rather than of indigenous origin; outside influences are most likely to have come from the Upper Palaeolithic III-VI of Palestine, but we cannot be certain. "One might with nearly as much persuasion argue that at times movements of people and techniques were in the opposite direction." We are not yet sure whether the diversity of lithic assemblages in Nubia and Upper Egypt between about 16,000 and 10,000 ac, reflects different economic postures, distinct groups of people or intrusions of new concepts. It is believed that the large cemeteries associated with the Qadan industry (c.12,000-9000 ac) reflect the existence of larger communities and closer identification with a particular territory than before; while the presence on some of the skeletons of signs of violent death might indicate conflict and competition under conditions of population stress.

The chapter on sub-Saharan Africa is perhaps less successful, especially the part on West Africa, which is not so up-to-date as the rest. The author confirms the desirability of getting rid of the spurious only "the Magosian" (although curiously he does not refer to Cole's classic 1967 paper on the subject), and of not giving "the Willows" wider application outside Cape Province. He sticks to his belief that the development of microliths was associated with the growth of denser vegetation cover, whereas others have given exactly the opposite interpretation. The survey of lithic industries shows their gradual evolution from their local predecessors, in most cases as autochthonous developments without external stimulus. "Microlithic technology was locally developed in central Africa at a date significantly earlier than that of the introduction of its counterparts in Europe." In the human population, three groups are said to be represented: the Khoisan and "related to caucasoid", one may comment that it is preferable not to use, a linguistic term like Khoisan to indicate a gene-pool, and that those said to be "related to caucasoid stocks" may be Harnatix's "stomped negroids"; but the author is well aware of the complexity of this topic. Somewhat cursory treatment is given to the rock art which was so abundantly produced in this period. The oldest is over 25,000 years old, some examples date to the sixth and the fourth millennia ac, but the majority are to be assigned to the last few millennia. There is no evidence

for any connection between the rock art of the Sahara and that from south of the Equator. Non-decorative theories for the art are either cavalierly dismissed and there is no mention of the work of Vinnicombe, which broke new ground.

There are three chapters on Egypt: by Bruce Trigger on the rise of civilization there; by Barry Kemp on the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Periods; and by David O'Connor on the period 1552-664 ac. In the book these chapters are separated by others, but here it will be convenient to refer to them together. Not being an Egyptologist the present reviewer is not really in a position to offer any criticism, but they appear to be first-class, and to supersede those in the *Cambridge Ancient History*. What is excellent is that in every case considerable space and attention is paid to the relationship between Ancient Egypt and the lands beyond her borders in Africa; one guesses that this was an editorial direction. Much nonsense has been written about Ancient Egypt and negro Africa - in both directions; first, stemming from the heyday of super-diffusionism, an eagerness to see the hand of Egypt all over the continent in the supposed similarities of isolated culture-traits; and then the reaction against this, claiming that Ancient Egyptian civilization "was really black African" (as in the UNESCO volume). It is very valuable, therefore, to have these careful, sober and scholarly assessments of relations between Ancient Egypt and the rest of Africa.

Under "the rise of civilization in Egypt", it is perhaps a pity that in dealing with the important cluster of developments traditionally called "civilization", it is assumed that it is known what these are and that they constitute a single package. However, the chapter offers a valuable and comprehensive review of the Predynastic and Early Dynastic periods. Reconstructions based on later-recorded myths are abjured, and Trigger hesitates to invoke the "diffusion" to account for cultural change. He firmly declares that there is no trace of a non-Afroasiatic "African substratum" in the Ancient Egyptian language, and the evidence from physical anthropology furnishes no verification for the supposition that the early Predynastic population was negroid. Because many early sites lie buried under metres of silt, the known distributions of Predynastic cultures may be determined more by geological than by cultural factors. The almost total lack of stratified sites puts archaeologists of this period in Egypt at a disadvantage compared with their counterparts in south-west Asia. These difficulties still leave us very much in the dark about the things we should like to know concerning the economic, demographic and social circumstances of the emergence of the development called "civilization". Account is taken of the idea that centralization of authority arose in a situation of population pressure and warfare where the amount of agricultural land was restricted by the surrounding deserts, but the management of trade and of cultivation is seen as more formative in leading to stratification of society and the increasing concentration of political authority. Archaeology still sheds little light on the political history of Egypt in prehistoric times. Trigger supports Frankfort's view that "the union of the two kingdoms" was more the creation of politico-theological dogma than of historical reality, and that a unified kingdom of Lower Egypt probably never existed. Nor do we know as much as we should like about prehistoric methods of land tenure, or how the concept of the "divine king" arose; there is a fair-minded discussion whether this arose in Egypt or spread to the Nileotic tribes; to the south or whether it arose from a common origin and similar predisposing circumstances.

The nature of this kingship is discussed in some detail in Kemp's chapter, which takes us to the end of the Second Intermediate Period, in the context of Egyptian ways of thinking, and with the king seen as the upholder of an ordered society. Pyramids are regarded first, and foremost, as temples for the royal statues, with a royal tomb attached to each, which acting as a huge reliquary, gave enormous authority to what was, in

essence, an ancestor cult and an important factor in the stability of government. More data is given on the Hyksos to show that they were not the "shepherd-kings" of Manetho, but Asiatics establishing themselves in the eastern delta out of the chaotic conditions the Middle Kingdom fell into, there having been numbers of Asiatics living and working in Egypt for some time. There is no discussion of the identity of the Hebrews and the lack of Egyptian evidence to confirm the Old Testament story of their sojourn in Egypt.

Both this and the last chapter on Egypt, taking us down to 664 ac, have something to say about the kingdom of Kush. Under the New Kingdom in Nubia "one may legitimately speculate that the distinctions between resident Egyptians and numerically dominant Nubians became increasingly blurred, with Nubians beginning to move into the upper levels of government and society. Unfortunately the acculturation process which makes it impossible to confirm this hypothesis, while data for Kush are as yet inadequate. For the evolution of the Kushite state throughout the Third Intermediate Period is undocumented, except for the tombs of the apparent predecessor of the 25th Dynasty at Kurru, near Napata (going back to 860 ac). This is another important and tantalizing question about which we are ignorant because of lack of evidence; perhaps archaeologists should go out and look for it. Volume Two of the *Cambridge History of Africa* Shinnie also has to dismiss the question by saying "Evidence for the first Kushite rulers and for the culture of their people is scanty."

A great deal of attention is paid to identifying the lands of Punt. The authors of both the last two chapters on Egypt place it in the general area of northern Eritrea rather than further south along the Red Sea Coast or even beyond the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. An established emporium on the Eritrean coast could have drawn on the incense trees native to southern Arabia. For incense and gold were the principal commodities the Egyptians desired from the lands to the south-east of their domain. They did not have imperial ambitions like the Assyrians, Persians or Hittites; once their territorial integrity was assured and trade routes to needed materials protected, they were satisfied. There is little evidence for widespread Egyptian influence throughout the continent, from western to southern Africa, as has been claimed by some. Even where some claims are eventually proven, as now they are not, any cultural diffusion is likely to have been through the mediation of partly Egyptianized Kushites and Libyans rather than direct contact.

Outside Egypt, three chapters are concerned with the same economic development which made the Egyptian developments possible - the change from food-collecting to food-producing; chapter by Gabriel Camps on the beginning of pastoralism and the cultivation in north-west Africa and the Sahara, one by Jack Harlan on the origins of indigenous African agriculture, and one by David Phillipson on early food production in sub-Saharan Africa. The first of these chapters is in some ways the least satisfactory. In the references that go up to 1978, it is as if most of it was written before that. There are no references to Andrew Smith's excavations at Kärkarichinkai, nor to Sutor's "aquatic" nor to Clark and above all, to Roubert's magnificent work at the Grotte Capelle. The chapter is a very useful source of information on the evidence, but on found it necessary to make three interventions. Two of these concern the author's advocacy of an early date (7th millennium ac) for an independent center of cereal domestication in the Sahara. He may say, but at present the evidence is either slender or open to alternative explanation (pollen grains of a certain size), or indirect, in the form of pottery, vessels and grinding equipment. Camps says that Neolithic agriculture at this early date is indisputable; if we connect it with the existence of pottery, but

then most archaeologists today would regard belief in a necessary and invariable connection between the two as old-fashioned. He also falls into the trap of putting forward a tentative interpretation and then using this as if it were a fact to further the argument. It is clear now that there were cattle pastoralists widely spread over the Sahara, then moister, from 6000 ac onwards, but whether they also had domesticated cereals at such an early date must for the time being remain an open question. It is also an open question whether they had domesticated the local wild cattle of North Africa or had received them from outside - perhaps via Tunisia rather than Egypt. (In the French literature of the subject, these cattle pastoralists are known as "Les bovidiens", and "bovidien" is used adjectivally as a cultural term and to refer to the period of their dominance. Need this be translated into English as "Bovidian"? Among other things, it results in some odd phrases, such as "Bovidian lithic industries".)

The latter part of this chapter has a useful account of the coming of metal technology to North Africa, and of the origin of the Berbers. There is some welcome scepticism about seeing "chariot-routes" in the distribution of rock-paintings and engravings of chariots. The "routes" are dismissed as wishful thinking; the chariots were too light for transporting anything useful, and they are sometimes portrayed in places where it would have been impossible for chariots to go. They are interpreted as status symbols pertaining to chiefs or noblemen. There are a number of statements in this chapter not consistent with those made in other chapters, which have not called for editorial comment; often Camps's views are to be preferred. For example, what he says about the extent of the "Neolithic of Eastern Tradition" correct what is said earlier in Phillipson's chapter.

The chapter by Harlan on the origins of indigenous African agriculture is the shortest and most readable in the book - perhaps because it is written by a non-archaeologist. Conscientiously cautious, archaeologists are at a tremendous disadvantage in their writing because their interpretations have to be so carefully hedged about with "perhaps". Harlan's chapter forms a refreshing contrast. He lists eighteen indigenous cultivated plants of the savanna complex (of which five are cereals), twenty for the forest-margin complex (including oil-palm and four species of yam), and seven for the Ethiopian complex (including two cereals). All these African domesticates make nonsense of the question posed not so long ago by writers on Africa: "What did the population live on before the introduction of American and Asiatic food crops?" The existence of these African agricultural techniques are fundamental to an understanding of the processes of centralization, urbanization and state-formation which are the subjects of later volumes in the *Cambridge History*. Harlan concedes the possibility that the ground grain of the Sahara between the sixth and the third millennium ac was wheat and barley, although not arriving from south-west Asia via the Nile valley (he was writing, presumably, before Wendert's discovery of ancient barley there). Others believe that the seeds ground in these early dates were the grains of wild grasses which became ancestral of the shabellon cereals which were in fact domesticated, especially pearl millet and sorghum. For this process Harlan follows Clark in saying "the time-range 3000-1000 ac might have been critical as the Saharan pastoralists moved southwards compelled by desiccation and necessarily in order, not themselves but by those with whom they came into contact." Clark has offered a model for this process arising as a result of the pressure of incoming pastoralists upon the indigenous hunter-gatherers - but quite how it works is not clear. A better model seems to be that of the hunter-gatherer-flower way of life around the Saharan lakes but having to concentrate and adapt their food-supplies when increasing aridity caused these to dwindle. However, Harlan himself gives a healthy

warning not to be too enamoured of any one particular model, because there is no single one which works universally for all the known incursions of agriculture. Another area of independent agricultural innovation in Africa may have been Ethiopia.

The last part of this chapter oversteps the 500 ac boundary-line to pursue the topic through to the inclusion of the crops introduced by Europeans, and also overlaps with Phillipson's chapter on sub-Saharan Africa. This in turn repeats a lot of the information given in his earlier chapter on the Later Stone Age; since at the beginning the intention was announced of dealing with domesticated animals in Africa (Harlan having dealt with the crops one is surprised to find the amount of space devoted to pottery and stone tools. As with Chapter Six, the treatment of West Africa is weaker than the rest; for example, no account is taken of suggestions published since 1976 for economic and ecological relationships between different Late Stone Age tool-kits and different geographical environments; the statement "the only African cattle naturally immune to trypanosomiasis are the humpless shortorns of West African coastal regions" disregards the more resistant Ndama of the Fouta Djallon. The attitude is diffusionist, and the possibility of indigenous yam and oil-palm domestication unmentioned from "the north" is not entertained.

In summary, one can say that this volume is as good and as up-to-date a description of the present state of knowledge on this vast topic as one is likely to get; in addition it provides authoritative interpretation in the best traditions of scholarship. It offers an invaluable mine of data for the specialist student and the scholar, rather than a broad canvas, discussing major issues, painted for the benefit of the general reader. The trees are so many and are so conscientiously described that it will require a lot of hard work for many readers before they can get a view of the wood.

One would like to see published a smaller volume, using the data so painstakingly gathered together in the present one, first identifying and then treating some of the major themes in early African history. Ochieng's identification of African poverty and "backwardness" has already been referred to. Others are of two kinds: before the break-out of hominids from Africa, and afterwards. The first sort are themes in the history of mankind - such as the relationships between environment and behaviour in human evolution, between behaviour and changes in anatomy and physiology (eg. loss of oestrus), and the development of speech and language. The second would be more peculiarly African, with an intermediate position for a theme such as the relationship between environment and the development of culture by *H. erectus* and *H. sapiens*. Agriculture is the one topic that has been given thematic treatment, but other "African" themes could be concerned with demography (however difficult it is at the moment to obtain reliable data; 2,000,000 is suggested as the population of Egypt in Early Dynastic times, surely a high percentage of the total population of the whole continent at the time), the history of the languages of Africa, social organization and stratification, the development of genetic groupings and their interrelationships, metallurgy, religion, settlement patterns, the causes and mechanics of cultural change, exchange systems, centralization and state-formation, and so on. It is not that these questions are ignored in the present volume, but they tend to be touched upon "on the way", or in relation to a particular piece of evidence, rather than being made central and evidence being gathered to bear upon them.

To say this is not to denigrate the book under review - it is simply to say what kind of a book it is, and wherein its value lies. In any case, its price puts it beyond the pockets of all but the wealthy and it will be predominantly a library reference volume. All concerned with the prehistory of Africa must be grateful to the Cambridge University Press for having produced it, to Desmond Clark for its editing, and to every one of the contributors. Printings, reproduction of figures and plates, binding, index are all good.

ART HISTORY

Idealism in the round

Michael Baxandall

JUSTUS BIER

Tilmann Riemenschneider: His Life and Work
128pp. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky. \$27.50.
0 8131 1428 4

Riemenschneider, considered as a monograph subject, is the most bulky of the sculptors of the early German Renaissance. His large workshop left more pieces of sculpture than any other, and also a fair number of documents. The typical Riemenschneider problem is above all one of the reconstruction of ensembles. His work was a great victim of the Barockisierung of Franconian churches, and hundreds of figures dispersed from a dozen complexes have to be grouped and reconstituted.

Justus Bier's work on Riemenschneider has been a scholarly marathon. In the early 1920s he wrote a doctoral dissertation on early Riemenschneider under the supervision of Heinrich Wölfflin. This was a basis for the first book, *Tilmann Riemenschneider: Die frühen Werke* of 1925. The next instalment came, from a different publisher but in the same format, in 1930 and covered middle-period Riemenschneider: *Die reifen Werke*. A serial monograph, more systematic than anything on the subject before, was under way.

But in the 1930s Bier moved to America, first to teach and later to be a distinguished museum director; from the 1940s he was publishing articles on Riemenschneider again but the concluding volumes of the monograph had to wait. Finally, in the 1970s, they came: *Die späten Werke in Stein* (1973) and *Die späten Werke in Holz* (1978). What is more, they were produced in just the same format as the early volumes. Verlag Schroll of Vienna

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Adding to the howl of anguish

David Sweetman

NGUGI WA THIONG'O

Devil on the Cross
254pp. Heinemann. £7.50.
0 435 90651 8

Waringa, the protagonist of *Devil on the Cross*, has a recurring nightmare: "Instead of Jesus on the Cross, she would see the Devil, with skin as white as that of a very fat European she once saw near the *Rift Valley Sports Club*, being crucified by people in tattered clothes—like the ones she used to see in Bondeni—and after three days, he would be taken from the Cross by black people in suits and ties, and, thus restored to life, he would mock Waringa."

There is enough in that to show that the while reader is in for a rough ride, not merely from the moral tone of the novel but from the methods used to get its message across—that *Rift Valley Sports Club* detail, pinning down a fantasy with a fact, elsewhere becomes a remorseless attention to the details of time and place. Our heroine does not simply walk around Nairobi, she walks "right along River Road, across Ronald Ngala Street, to find herself standing at the edge of Racecourse Road, between St Peter's Clavers Church and the sewing-machine shop, at the Kaka Hotel bus stop". Inevitably, such topographical exactness, overlaid with an abundance of Gikuyu folk wisdom, that which pecks never pecks for another, the sort of thing that always sounds like a Gikuyu

Show script when put into English—hardly makes this a jolly read. But then the book wasn't written for whitefools. It was written for Ngugi's own people, in their own language, from which he has made an English translation. The signs are that this is very much a second-best affair over which the author has not wasted much trouble, for where the English isn't over-detailed or folksy it is liable to be just plain flat. Surprisingly then, the book is well worth reading, for what to us are its faults are elsewhere its virtues.

Waringa's dream is a metaphor for the Kenya she knows, a land that has replaced its colonial masters with a rapacious black elite who act as middlemen for the foreign capital that continues to exploit the country's poor. The flamboyant greed of this elite is made more unbearable by the bitterness of those who have been deluded by the promises of Independence. The story of Waringa is the story of that disillusion, told without any attempt at subtlety.

Seduced by a rich old man and abandoned when she is pregnant, Waringa moves to Nairobi. She works as a secretary, trying to pay for the child that her parents are fostering, but is sacked when she refuses to sleep with her boss. She sets off for home in the company of her boyfriend Gatutu, and each person encountered on their journey has a tale to tell: the novel digresses in the manner of the oral tradition as each adds his or her life-story to the collective howl of anguish at the morass of theft and misery that is Ngugi's vision of his country. The first third of the novel unfolds in this naturalistic style only to plunge us into

symbolic fantasy, as the lovers find themselves summoned to a gathering of all the great crooks of Kenya to select the greatest of their number. One claims to sell imported foreign air, another has made a fortune by running a school in which only foreign subjects and methods are employed and where "Colour is no bar: Money is the bar". Two-thirds in, the novel might have been finished as a work of ironic despair, but Ngugi was not prepared to leave things like that. In the final third, fact and fantasy merge as wish-fulfillment: the peasants rise up and drive away the thieves and Waringa becomes an activist and revolutionary, working as a motor mechanic, learning judo in readiness for the coming struggle.

A rough ride indeed; and this from a man who was chairman of the Literature Department at Nairobi University, a respected novelist in what was settling down to be the ALit tradition. It is obvious that to a foreign reader the background to the book is an essential prerequisite, and although the publishers briefly outline the facts of Ngugi's detention, for writing what Kenya and his subordinates considered a seditious paper because it was not written in easy-to-understand English but performed by and for peasants in Kikuyu—and explain that this novel was written on lavatory paper during the year the author was imprisoned, all this has only been set out on the dust-jacket, as perishable a commodity as loo-paper, when it should have been the subject of an explanatory note at the front of the book. As should be clear, the novel does not stand on its own, nor, I think, would Ngugi expect it to. It was written for the people it concerns, to highlight

all that they have experienced over the past twenty years and to propose a solution: the road of action, wherever that may lead.

It is a simple, folksy tract, meant for the just-literate or to be read aloud to the illiterate; hence what to us are its idiosyncrasies: the litany of street names adds that essential ring of truth for the farmer who may have attempted to cope with the maze that is the city on his rare visits. The discursive style, the rambling reminiscences are essential features of peasant story-telling everywhere.

This book marks the end of a cosy

relationship between African writers and the metropolitan culture. Rough, uncomfortable, infuriating to us, African writing is going home, and with surprising results. Take the protagonist of this novel: who would have expected that a male writer from the Third World would choose to make his central character a woman, and to give his book such a surprising twist at the end—for when Waringa is taken by Gatutu to announce their marriage to his parents and she discovers that his father is the very man who initially seduced and abandoned her, she kills him and walks out on the lot of them.

Heavy sessions

Michael Trend

DAVID STUART RYAN

Looking for Kathmandu

251pp. Kozmick Press Centre, 48A Astonville Street, London SW18. £6.50.
0 905 11605 4

David Stuart Ryan's *Looking for Kathmandu* is a novel for those who can remember the Pudding Shop in Istanbul – that halfway house for travellers in the 1960s on their way to the enlightened East. Here there was a brisk trade in coffee and sticky cakes, hashish and blood. Ryan is a late entrant – perhaps the last – in the genre of Sixties-Journey-to-the-East novels. Since the closure of Iran and Afghanistan the Journey itself is impossible and, one imagines, the novels of reminiscence have run out. Reading this book one wonders if it does not represent the beginning of a literature of nostalgia, both for the

nostalgia. Peter is one of the ignorant, bigoted elitists who abound in those days. "You are so lucky to be going to India to find hidden truths", he is told. But he in fact learns to despise the peoples and cultures through which he moves – the dirty Turk, the shifty Persian. The closer he gets to the East, however, the more acceptable the people become – the Afghans and Tibetans, placid and drugged-to-the eyeballs, as he sees them.

Peter's ignorance of the history of the countries through which he travels is great. His forays into "philosophy" are obscure. "To make love in a country is to know its mood detailedly, for it is seen in its own light as a provider of life and the thistle and the boulder stream mountainside, they appreciated, also – cared for its own." But whatever other effect the placid and "caring" East has on these Westerners there is no doubt that they jump to the front of the doctor's queue of "natives" when they become ill.

Ryan's style of writing is dense. Many of his sentences are overloaded to the point of bursting and his punctuation is often an obstacle course for the reader. One misspelling is particularly ironic because of its "intellectual links" – our heroes see themselves as "privileged [sic] products of privileged societies". The publishers have further aided and abetted the author by accepting a very low standard of production.

Staying in touch

Alannah Hopkin

MARIAN SCHWARTZ

Realities

337pp. Plakatos. £6.95.
0 86188 156 7

The idea behind *Realities* is very simple: the entire novel consists of letters, that Jennifer Weaver writes to her dead husband Richard while she and her two small children adjust to their new life in California. The device works well: *Realities* is an intricate and satisfying novel. Its simple, undramatic story acquires a force which extends beyond the heroine's personal concerns, to comment on the larger, century pathology of racist violence – and is still able to articulate its faith in "the dream".

We hear in the first few pages how Richard, a model husband and father

Note on the Language Riots in Tamil Nadu, 1967

"They poured kerosene over their own bodies And sat them on fire. No, there was no end to their spring of anger. Gelled in a gyro."

They made a mighty image of a Hindi-speaker From wire and sacking, Wheeled it through the shouting streets, gave it A slipper-whacking."

Kevin Crossley-Holland

Greasepaint and Ghosts, edited by Peter Haining. 259pp. 0 (2183 0378 4); an anthology of "Strange and Supernatural stories from the world of Theatre". Includes tales by Abraham Lincoln, Bram Stoker, Sarah Bernhardt, Orion Welles.

FICTION

She into space

David Montrose

AMANDA HEMINGWAY

Psyche
255pp. Faber. £7.95.
0 571 11875 5

Thanks to William Burroughs, Kurt Vonnegut, and Doris Lessing, among others, readers are becoming accustomed to the (occasionally dubious) distinction between SF writers and those who utilize SF forms. Amanda Hemingway's first novel aims for the latter company.

The opening chapter introduces its eponymous heroine: a beautiful young woman living an ivory tower existence on a barren planet far distant in time and space. Psyche's fellow tower-dwellers – the only people she has encountered since infancy – are Doctor Corzini, her reclusive father, and Golov, an authentic dumb writer (Psyche has been educated by computer). Into this closed society comes Psyche's sister, Thoe, unborn when the Doctor rejected his wife and the world. For the first time, Psyche experiences emotions, a personal relationship; even saying "good morning" requires practice.

To this point, the novel is somewhat reminiscent of Angela Carter's *Heroes and Villains* – though Hemingway does not have Carter's lush style – and seems set to chronicle Psyche's deconditioning. This expectation – supported by the title, the dust jacket notes, even the picture on the cover – is

thoroughly confounded by a rapid shift into space opera.

Carter's novel owed much to the mainstream SF of John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids*; the Challenger draws on older models: the Challenger stories of Conan Doyle, Rider Haggard's romances, Buck Rogers serials. We have a lost city, fabulous treasure (in the form of mineral deposits), multiple murders, a Napoleon of interplanetary crime, even an absent-minded professor of archaeology. The civilized universe is endangered.

"You must listen," said Calath, for the fourth or fifth time. "The issue is not just one of money or even of crime. Mammonite reserves form the basis for the economies of all the galactic superpowers. The wealth of a planet can be measured in a single crystal. Our hidden puppeteer is not dealing in platinum or wildcat gold; he is dealing in governments and spacefleets, in empires and men. The souls of presidents will be his small change. The balance of power will be his plaything. We must stop that, at any cost."

Psyche is relegated to a sub-plot, her subsequent perils largely consisting of unsuccessful assaults on her virginity. Matters eventually resolve themselves into a happy ending. The arch-villain, discomfited, succumbs to heart-failure; Psyche has her virginity intact, and she and Thoe find true love.

Throughout, suspicions of a spoof wink and wane. Certainly, Hemingway indulges in some judicious sending-up of the genre: her archaeologist, for instance, has previously discovered a Hidden City, a Lost City, and a

Forgotten City, and confuses memories of the three. The send-ups, though, are too widely dispersed to be the whole point. Elsewhere, the novel seems to ask for serious consideration. At times, it is difficult to oblige. Especially in the later stages, where Psyche and Thoe, together with the brave companions, who have assembled about them, escape in the nick of time from a planet about to explode. The episode might have worked had some parodic perspective defused the cliché – recognized as such even in Kingsley Amis's beloved Golden Age – but, if there is any humour in Hemingway's presentation, it is so deadpan as to be invisible.

Hemingway is attempting to have her stylistic cake and eat it, producing an adventure yarn that pre-empt criticism by poking periodic fun at its own creaky conventions. This is more demanding a form than it appears, and one handled unconvincingly here: the author has little flair for suspense, while the comedy – for which she does have a feel – occurs too infrequently.

Amanda Hemingway was acknowledged as promising on the evidence of her story, "The Alchemist", in Faber's *Introduction 7*. The larger testimony of *Psyche* reveals that she is, as yet, stylistically immature – her habitually cold prose tends to overheat into melodrama when a rise in temperature is required – and lacks the experience to disguise her limitations. But there are inklings of ability. Until we can see what her second novel holds, it would be prudent to consider this one a false start.

The six central characters of *A Killing Frost* share a sense of impotence and frustration. Simon and Anita Silverman have a tense and unsatisfying marriage, and Simon, his creative drive repressed, has just quixotically resigned his teaching post at an art school to devote his final years to painting. Sergeant Mason is taking a weekend of army leave in order to avenge his sister who has drowned herself after being abandoned, six months pregnant, by her married lover, while Ambrose Calvin, a hack novelist, has finally written a satisfying book and been offered a fortune for the film rights but only on condition that his masterpiece be rewritten and vulgarized (his *nom de plume*,

Secret-sharers

T. O. Treadwell

CHRISTOPHER LEACH

A Killing Frost

234pp. Dent. £7.50.
0 460 045377

There is an old critical chestnut which holds that all the stories in the literature of the world are reducible to six basic plots. However firmly one rejects this depressing label on human inventiveness, it must be admitted that certain stock situations recur in fiction with obsessive regularity.

A Killing Frost has its central device one of the hoariest of the storyteller's stock-in-trade – what might be called the "strangers in a lifeboat" motif. In Christopher Leach's version, six ordinary people, sharers by chance of the same commuter railway carriage, are caught in the grip of an appalling blizzard which buries their train and cuts them off absolutely from the sustaining machinery of the modern world. It turns out, of course, that the six strangers are not in fact as ordinary as all that; each of them is for one reason or another at a point of personal crisis, and the resolution of these crises is the novel's principal theme.

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significantly, is "Jake Barnes", the name of the emasculated hero of Hemingway's *Fiesta*). A high-powered secretary betrayed by her executive lover and a young man suffocated by his strict Catholic upbringing complete the cast.

These people come together in a moment of collective emergency and are then released – all except Silverman, the exuberant art teacher who dies of a heart attack in the snowbound carriage. Their ordeal is not particularly long-lasting but in the twenty-four hours or so they spend together they form a community. The sense of fellowship thus generated is exclusive and selfish, however, and when passengers trapped in the next carriage break out and demand to join them they refuse to let them in.

The survivors are rescued and go their separate ways, the experience of crisis shared having changed nothing. Anita Silverman brings the obduracy that has stifled her husband's creative energy into the life of her son-in-law and newborn grandson; Sergeant Mason's revenge is a humiliating fiasco. The writer Calvin, the most interesting of Leach's characters, realizes that he must acquiesce in the prostitution of his talent. The frost in the title of this deeply pessimistic novel is not the cold spell that traps the train – it is the empty coldness of life itself in which hope and love wither and die.

The communication of this bleak vision of the world through a structural cliché is an interesting idea but not, finally, an effective one. Too little happens in the frozen train for the novel to work well as melodrama, while the melodramatic nature of the device weakens its suggestiveness as a metaphor for the wintry irony of human life.

POSTAGE: INLAND 151p ABROAD 17p

SECOND-CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, NY. PRICE IN SUBSCRIPTIONS (BY AIR FREIGHT) \$10.00 YEARLY. TIMES NEWS-RECORD OF GREAT BRITAIN, 201 EAST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10017.

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Survivors

Sometimes they cross an avenue at dusk, those hoarse-voiced children brashly on the move from mews to alley. Mostly they seem too young to keep such hours, or underdressed for air that cuts its teeth on glass and barbed-wire coils, the rusted nails of half-wrecked garages. They root behind our lives for what they can find: the bones of broken telephones, old cars picked bare already to their oiliest springs, dead spars along the embankment; hug their loads of chosen bric-a-brac and, blindly assured, ignite with purposes: to float an ark or point a bonfire, angle a sheet of tin against a brick wall and call it home, or call it a tree house. As they flit from view their voices seek the twilight. Their track is a littered silence where they resound.

Frank Ormsby

As for the journalists, Boychester, the editor, grotesquely isolated in a self-esteem fed by years of vox pop leader-writing, the corrupting flattery of local notabilities (Grosz-fodder to a person) and the huge adoring embraces of his rich Weybridge-nurtured wife, conjures up fresh triumphs from the glowing crystal VDT screens banked expectantly in the new Holborn offices. Such optimism finds no echo in the hearts of Boychester's reporters

Cathal Dwyer and David Camina, the rebel Irishman and the assimilated Jew. Dreams haunt them in The Trenches, their drab Kilburn lodging-house. The ageing Dwyer sees his vision of freedom incorporated in his creation Flaherty, hero of his sprawling never-to-be-completed play about the Partition, scattered among the lining of his jacket, his office drawer and the editor's pockets ("MB B'hist as model of Brit oppression"). Camina, in a recurring nightmare, becomes Isaac Rosenberg in the trenches, "the only real war poet not in the officer class"; like Boychester, "the sergeant barking at him had an orange face and a tiny

As for the journalists, Boychester, the editor, grotesquely isolated in a self-esteem fed by years of vox pop leader-writing, the corrupting flattery of local notabilities (Grosz-fodder to a person) and the huge adoring embraces of his rich Weybridge-nurtured wife, conjures up fresh triumphs from the glowing crystal VDT screens banked expectantly in the new Holborn offices. Such optimism finds no echo in the hearts of Boychester's reporters

Renaissance routines

Henry Woudhuysen

PATRICK CULLEN and THOMAS P. ROCHE
Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual II
245pp. University of Pittsburgh Press, £17.50.
0 8229 3408 n

The second volume of *Spenser Studies* maintains the high standard of contributions set by the first (reviewed in TLS May 8, 1981). It contains twelve essays, all but one by American and Canadian academics, on "Spenser scholarship and criticism and related Renaissance subjects". Four pieces on *The Shepherdes* are followed by two on *The Faerie Queene*, one each on the "unfortunate" *Daphnia*, *The Ruines of Rome*, and finally accounts of three relatively little-known poems: "The Phoenix and the Turtle", Drummmond's *The Mower of May* and Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia and Amphilanthus*.

Probably the best and most scholarly piece in the collection is the first, R. S. Laborsky's account of the woodcuts of the *Calender*, of which Spenser said that Michelangelo could not better "amende the best, nor reprehende the worst". Dr Laborsky continues her attempt, begun in *Spenser Studies I*, to interpret the woodcuts' meaning and relationship with the poem, by tracing their contemporary sources and analogues, and by examining their styles. Although at times over-enthusiasm, she is largely convincing in showing how important a part of the *Calender* as a whole they are. Equally on the problematic iconography of *Occasion* in *Faerie Queene* Book II, which he seeks to resolve through relating her appearance and actions to traditional representations of *Fortune*, W. R. Davis contributes a short and clever account of how the reader's experience of the same book is like *Calender's* progress through it, while L. A. Montrose, stillly retires R. B. Bond's view of the February Eclogue as belonging to a "tradition" of attacks on the Elizabethan court. There are

historical interpretations and biographical speculations from L. S. Johnson and W. A. Gram, structural analyses lapsing into numerology from R. T. Eriksen - suggesting Giordano Bruno as the turtle in and behind Shakespeare's poem - and S. L. Severance on Drummmond, and finally a hint of feminism from E. V. Beillon on Lady Mary Wroth.

Few new readers will be won over to Renaissance literature by *Spenser Studies*, which is clearly aimed at an academic, professional audience. In some cases there is little feeling for the poetry and, one suspects, less love for it. What the "Annual" seeks to do other than to publish new work (often already given in papers at conferences) is not quite clear. It has no "view" of the subject, no discernible "approach" to it, other than the numerical and voluminous, no sense of an editorial hand at work, no attempt to harmonize contradictions, nor to standardize their references and quotations, no list of plates and no index.

All's not so well

Brian Vickers

HOWARD C. COLE

The 'All's Well' Story from Boccaccio to Shakespeare
145pp. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, £8.
0 252 00883 9

Howard Cole, in studying the sources of *All's Well*, adds to the main source (*Decamerone* III, 9), a fifteenth-century Burgundian chronicle romance and Accolti's *Virginia*. Cole claims that his special contribution lies in considering "the story" as such, not merely in relation to Shakespeare; yet he gives no extended analysis of it in any of its versions, nor does he use the tools - helpful if not applied too mechanically - provided by the narratology of Propp, Bremond, Todorov, Genette and others. Indeed, he seems unable to focus on the narrative for long, constantly digressing into background information, diligently researched but of no relevance to "the story". His previous book was called *A Quest of Inquiry: Some Contexts of Tudor Literature*, and it seems as if the same approach is used here. Sadly, after the quantity of biographical, literary and historical information assembled for the French chronicle and Italian play, Cole is unable to make any claim for Shakespeare's knowledge of them, nor has he applied any wider analytical frame to the story itself.

When it comes to the core of his study, Shakespeare's use of Boccaccio, Cole's fascination with irony, satirical undercutting, deflation, reveals his debt to the supposedly superseded

New Criticism. While Shakespeare used irony for several important structural parallels and contrasts (especially between Bertram and Parolles), Cole ignores the question of structure (much discussed in recent criticism) to focus on one character, Helena. His discussion of Boccaccio is geared to proving that Giletta, Helena's model, is ironically judged by the story and by its context. But the argument is often forced, as when the narrator of Giletta's story is proved for not having considered the story that followed her own: obviously, Boccaccio's readers enjoy knowledge withheld from his characters. As for Helena, Cole, like many modern critics - but all the more surprisingly since he has chosen to dedicate a whole book to the story of a resourceful and successful heroine - cannot take virtue, or virtuous characters, at face-value, or at the valuation of them given by other characters in the play. Shakespeare could not possibly have been so naive as to imagine a wholly or even mainly good person; some nastier motives must be found. Of Helena's vows to make penance Cole writes "But even here humility is self-enhancing and remorse self-glorifying". As Helena's plans finally succeed Cole's irritation with her spreads to the play, with complaints about "the gratuitous complexities of the final scene", and "equally ridiculous scene-squeezing" elsewhere, complaints that come oddly from a critic who has not analysed this narrative in detail, nor concerned himself with dramatic structure.

The final impression of this book (which has been very poorly proof-read, as if the play had not lived up to the critic's aesthetic or ethic.

The Mellerio affair

Daniel Karlin

MARK SIEGCHRIST

Rough In Brutal Print: The Legal Sources of Browning's 'Red Cotton Night-Cap Country'
187pp. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, \$15.
0 8142 0327 2

Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, one of the finest of Browning's late works (and axiomatic one of the least regarded) is based on a juicy scandal among the *haute bourgeoisie* of nineteenth-century Paris, a scandal with all the classic ingredients: sex, religion, and money. Antonio Mellerio, dissolute heir to one of the richest jewellery firms in Paris (still established in the Rue de la Paix) lived with his mistress, Sophie Debecker, at the family "château", Tailleville, near St Aubin in Normandy. The death of his mother, and the attendant reproaches of his relatives and the Church, precipitated in Antonio a crisis of remorse, with gruesome results: he thrust his hands, holding a basket of Sophie's letters, into the fire, shouting "Bury them! purify my past!" It was purified with a vengeance: both hands were reduced to stumps. This frenzy was followed by a total relapse: Antonio went back to Sophie (his relatives were later to accuse her of kidnapping him in the street) and the couple returned to Tailleville, Antonio having sold his share of the jewellery business to his relatives. At Tailleville Antonio's behaviour was certainly

eccentric: according to one story, he "borrowed" a lamb from a local shepherd and took it home with him to bed, where it covered him with ticks; he gave it a "bath of purification", he told the shepherd, "and now it is the 'Agnus Dei'". In 1870 Antonio died of a fall from the top of the tower or "Belvedere" which was one of his most conspicuously vulgar "improvements" to the property.

The scandal broke in full force because of Antonio's will. He left Tailleville to a local religious foundation, the convent of "Notre Marie de la Délivrance", reserving, however, a life-interest for Sophie. The family alleged that the convent taken advantage of Antonio's mental infirmity, the ultimate proof of which was, of course, his having committed suicide. They brought suit against the sacred and profane love machine; by a rich historical irony, the hearing of this case of private folly, greed and hypocrisy was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war (one of the chief witnesses for the plaintiffs, the family doctor who had treated Antonio after his self-mutilation, was killed by the Communards at the Pont de Neuilly), but the family eventually lost the case, appealed, lost again, and were finally - and severely - squashed by the Cour de Cassation. The press and law reports of the case, reproduced in excellent-sounding translations in Mark Siegchrist's book, gave the kind of fascinating glimpse of the underworld of rich respectability which we expect nowadays from Texas; and it is here, in

the florid irony of the journalism, the ornate rhetoric of the opposing counsel, and the magisterial shrewdness of the judgments, that the real interest of his book lies.

In relation to the poem which Browning made of the events, the book is less successful. Siegchrist easily demonstrates that Browning's claim that his story "is no more nor less than a mere account treated poetically, of certain problematic facts taken just as I find them" is quite false; that Browning comprehensively misrepresented the essential features of the case, taking as facts, for example, some of the wild allegations of Mellerio's relatives about the conduct of the Convent and Sophie, allegations which were conclusively disproved in court. But as far back as *Paracelsus* (1835) Browning had been making disingenuous statements about the historical authenticity of his work. Siegchrist argues naively that the poem is shown to be inaccurate in its use of fact. But the relation between fact and perception is precisely the subject of the poem, which contrasts the truth of events in their ordered and classified sequence with the truth of creativity, destroying and re-making times and categories. The form of the poem, with which Siegchrist fails adequately to come to grips, shows that Browning knew perfectly well what he was about, before his time (in this as in so much irony). Both his poem and Siegchrist's book deserve to be read; but not one in the light of the other.

Returning spirally

Stanley Weintraub

DANIEL MARK FOGEL

Henry James and the Structure of the Romantic Imagination
193pp. Louisiana State University Press, £10.80.
0 8071 0789 1

Despite Henry James's often elliptical prose, and his periodic sentences with their enormous capacity for qualification, it is clear that antithesis and its resolution were often a fulcrum of his fiction. To demonstrate yet again their centrality to James's art is to do little more than re-state the premise that he was in careful control of his pen. Daniel Mark Fogel offers this surprising finding in a vaguely titled study which has less to do with "the structure of the Romantic

Imagination" - notwithstanding allusions to the literary legacy of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, and Keats - than with the concept of "spiral return", a plot variant of moving "full circle".

Much is made here of the "affinity of James's imagination for the Romantic dialectic of spiral return", a pattern, in the terms of Fogel's mentor M. H. Abrams, in which ideas "inevitably move out of themselves to the extremes of their own antitheses, only to return into themselves on a higher level". Since Fogel acknowledges also that his thesis about James's use of the recognition of opposites "expands a widely shared idea about James" (he even identifies the relevant earlier critics), one may reasonably question the need for this book.

If nothing else, the Fogel formula offers intelligent and persuasive readings of the last major novels *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl* - and shows their structural relationships to some of James's early fiction, bearing out the author's own suggestions about the design of his work. In the earlier *The American* we observe the principal character, Christopher Newman, announcing the circularity of at least one of his experiences with "I'm going back to where I began. I am back there. I have been all around the circle." In the later *Golden Bowl*, James furnishes a literal spiral, in having Adam Verver reach a level of awareness of himself "that affected him as changing by a mere revolution of the screw his whole intellectual phase".

Not satisfied with demonstrating selectively the validity of his formula, Fogel concludes with a biographical parallel - that James's post-1895 "recovery of his powers of affirmation following the dark middle period gives his career itself the form of an ascending spiral". This illustration is romantic in the lower-case sense, and useless. And although it is possible to conceive (in Blakean terms) a marriage of contraries and a pattern of "spiral" circularity as essentials of both structure and theme in some Jamesian novels, the stories from *Roderick Hudson* at the beginning to *The Golden Bowl* at the end, it would be a Procrustean exercise indeed to fit Fogel's critical scheme to the facts of a long lifetime of Jamesian fiction.

Visionary bankers

Lachlan Mackinnon

CAROLYN PORTER

Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James, Adams, and Faulkner
339pp. New York: Wesleyan University Press, \$29.95.
0 8195 5054 X

Carolyn Porter has produced a powerful, broadly Marxist attempt to deny American literature the Adamic innocence to which it has often seemed to aspire. She employs Lukács's concept of reification to argue that her subjects, writers ostensibly withdrawn from history (with the exception of Faulkner), were in fact necessarily implicated in and marked by their times. The history which concerns her is that of the growth of capitalism, with its consequent dehumanizing effects.

Emerson is set against a background of massive industrial growth, and Porter argues that the ambiguity of the "transparent eyeball", the subject which tries to become its own object,

is, as it were, inscribed in the capitalist structure from which it struggles to differ. It must be stressed that her approach owes much to Raymond Williams and nothing to Althusser: the structures with which she deals are fluid hegemonies, not the omnipotent fields of structural theory. For Porter, the visionary poet seems to recapitulate the activity of the banker, manipulating the rules - of commerce, of history, of nature - by which he is himself bound. This argument is interesting when applied to Emerson, but when turned on Henry James it becomes dangerously reductive.

The Golden Bowl is distinguished to economic allegory, the Prince being a commodity who sells his exchange value to recover his use value. Maggie is the visionary poet who must endure the practical consequences of her undeniable vision - Thoreau for her own Emerson. This humiliation of the fictional universe is seen also in *Abraham*. *Abraham* becomes another study in visionary poetics, this time with Sutpen as seer. The reader himself is drawn into the human, active world

of talk to which Sutpen too must submit. Faulkner's career of narrative development is seen to constitute a search for such an entanglement of the reader, a will to involve him in the novel as though it were history; with Sutpen, Faulkner creates a truly American capitalist, a national rather than a regional figure, to whom the reader must react as to his model.

It is a great pity that Porter so mistrusts fiction's autonomy that she has to reduce it wholly to the condition of speech-act resistant to the flow of history, for this makes her readings with a book which does approach that condition. *The Education of Henry Adams*, she writes very well indeed. Her account of the way in which *The Education* refuses to be a memoir on the one hand or a novel on the other (she points to Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* as just such a novel) shows that Adams's self-centering is not Emersonian division carried to its logical extreme. The second part of *The Education*, the attempt to draw conclusions, lapses into uncertainty and incoherence precisely because all it

can say is that the Henry Adams of the first part must have been subject to the laws he is to discover. "The narrative chronicles accelerating and anarchic forces while the dynamic theory, if verified, dictates impotent submission."

This is not an easy book to read. The Marxist terminology is often repugnant, and the over-frequent references to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle are scientism of the worst kind. However, the book's interest is more than sectarian, and its challenge to critics of American literature is considerable.

Critical Essays on Hart Crane (280pp., Boston: G. K. Hall, 0 8161 3380 5), edited by David R. Gordon, B. Munson, Allen Tate, David R. Clark on *White Buildings* and by Horace Gregory, Malcolm Pemberton, Allen Tate, Waldo Dembo, Mary Jean Butts and Karl T. Piehl on *The Bridge*.

RELIGION

Mystic directions

Grace Jantzen

WILLIAM JOHNSTON
The Mirror Mind: Spirituality and Transformation
180pp. Collins, £5.95.
0 00 215331 1

William Johnston, a Jesuit professor at Sophia University in Tokyo and well known for his writings on Christian mysticism, was an obvious choice to give the 1980 Martin D'Arcy Memorial Lecture, which form the basis of this book. Their topic was the relationship of Christian spirituality and Eastern mysticism. Johnston begins by discussing the importance of inter-religious dialogue in a shrinking world, and the increasing self-knowledge and self-realization which it can bring. He focuses on a series of themes prominent in writings on Christian spirituality - the role of the body, the importance of silence, the use of Scripture. In each case, insights derived from Buddhism are brought to bear and these themes are given a deeper interpretation for Christian use in the total healing of the personality. As one would expect, Johnston scatters numerous gems on the way, ranging from suggestions for koan-like meditation on Scripture (in a era of Biblical criticism!) to comments on the importance of friendship for spiritual healing and enlightenment.

When we look more closely at some of Johnston's ideas, however, it emerges that he skates quickly over major difficulties which may prove dangerous to others. The first is the notion of dialogue. This topic is raised at the start in terms of the question of truth: since every human perspective is false, it cannot but be partial, and therefore only good will come if those of different faiths share their partial truths with one another in their mutual striving for more complete truth. This is in itself unproblematic, as is Johnston's exhortation, largely in categories drawn from Bernard Lonergan, to attentive listening. He then acknowledges, however, that both Christianity and Buddhism are missionary religions, zealous to proclaim their truths as the means of human salvation. This is to be discouraged, he says, because "as for clashing with one another, this will not

happen if Christians and Buddhists... freely recognize the truth and goodness in one another".

But this blurs the issues. We must recognize the partiality of our own insight, true; yet in so far as that insight is accepted as correct the opposite cannot be held also to be correct at the same time. For example, if Christians preach belief in God and incarnation and immortality as necessary for inhibiting enlightenment, then they do clash, even if not in anger. To be fair, Johnston admits that Buddhism and Christianity have separate identities and cannot simply be merged in mutual admiration: to label a Buddhist an incognito Christian is as insulting and unhelpful as calling a Christian an incognito Buddhist. Nevertheless he accepts too easily that there is shared ground: in his view the bare fact of being unconditionally committed to a truth, for example, is something that makes it possible for Christians and Buddhists to "join hands and march forward". But surely this holds only at the most abstract level. Concretely, the theological basis of Christianity is diametrically opposed to the non-theism of a Buddhist perspective. It is very awkward to hold hands while marching in opposite directions and to different drummers; and this would be true even if the ultimate destination were thought somehow to be the same.

Perhaps it is because of this that Johnston soon leaves discussion about truth as doctrine, and turns to dialogue about method in meditation and prayer. (Indeed, as the book progresses, even this dialogue changes into a gleaming far Christianity of insights and techniques derived from Buddhism, until by the final chapters references to Buddhism are replaced by notions from Jung-swallowed-whole.) But again, even if Buddhist insights on methods are helpful to Christian spirituality, this should not be taken to imply that there must be a shared core of experience prior to its diverse interpretations, as though experience does not always occur in a context which already contains important, and often grounds, that Johnston assumes that the goal of Christian and Buddhist mysticism is the same?

Fifty years on: space travel

The TLS of June 16, 1932 carried the following review by C. Hargr of *The Conquest of Space* by David Lasser:

We hope Jules Verne's spirit will read this book. For the second part of its three parts, the only fictitious part, pages 127-174, is Verne's "Voyage to the Moon" as Verne would have written it with sixty-six years' additional science. The weakest point of Verne's story was that the shock of starting from the huge cannon would certainly have killed every one inside the projectile, despite Michael Ardant's water-buffoon, but a step-rocket. The necessary seven-miles-a-second speed is gained by steps. Each second adds 100 feet per second to the speed, and the used-up rocket drops off. Even so, the effects of the rapid increase of speed during the first eight minutes are described as all but unbearable.

But the voyage to the moon, exciting as it is, is not the primary object of the book, which is the first English book on rockets. "The Conquest of Space" by rockets must begin with parts of space moon-trip is barely possible, but not likely to be attempted till a fuel is discovered more efficient than the present best, which is liquid hydrogen and oxygen. The present cost of a rocket to the moon would be about £20,000,000. Two battleships might be sent for that (and might sink each other with all hands). Hardly any student of the subject expects to reach the moon in the next twenty more years. "Navigation", like navigation, must begin with small things. But between

surface is a sphere in which rocket flights may very soon yield valuable knowledge and a speedier transit than any yet known. Although the Chinese used rockets in war in AD 1200, and rockets have saved life from wrecks for nearly a hundred years, it is only since about 1927, when R. Esnault-Pelterie published "Astronautics", that real advance has been made towards the use of rockets above aircraft range. The boldly named American Interplanetary Society, of which the author is president, was founded in 1930. A similar German society has 1,000 members, and France has a Committee for Astronautics. The cause has already one martyr, Herr Max Valier, killed in 1930 by an explosion in his 50 hp rocket-motor, which weighed only seven pounds. This book is dedicated to him.

For a flight from Berlin to New York by rocket, through the thin air 30 miles up, at present 52 tons of fuel would be needed for each ton of load; but Mr Lasser thinks this so near economic possibility that he devotes part of his last chapter to a description of a probable rocket-port on Long Island in 1950. Much sooner than that, we may expect results from Dr Goddard's weather-rocket station at Roswell, New Mexico, financed by the Guggenheim £20,000 gift. Instruments sent up by rocket will come down near; those sent up by balloon, even if they rise as far, often come down far off and are lost. New knowledge may be gained on the Heavenside Layer and on the question why wireless reception was worse in 1928-30 than it was in 1923-26. We may also find whether the short and highly penetrative "cosmic rays", from which our atmosphere is supposed to shield us partly, are a real

waste product of the building of the more complex atoms, they have been accused of causing old age by breaking up the atoms in our bodies. But M. Picard, ten miles up in 1931, felt no harm from them.

The idea of rocket-flight is simple, and has occurred to novelists. Cyrano in 1640 sent his voyagers to the moon in a box propelled by rockets. Verne in 1866 used them to check the fall to the moon. But it is not so simple in practice. The shell must be light, yet must stand enormous pressures and contrasts of heat. Steel is too brittle at very low temperatures. Liquid hydrogen at -253deg C must be close to a combustion chamber at +2,500deg C. In that combustion chamber the pressure must be high, and yet fuel must be pumped in. Small meteors may pierce the shell - big ones smash it. In the moon-trip passengers will find themselves weightless, and no one knows how the human heart will work then. A slight mistake in steering may turn the rocket into a permanent satellite. The fuel difficulty might be solved, as regards heat units, by monatomic hydrogen; but no known material could stand the 18,000deg C it would generate. Atomic disintegration, if complete, would yield 18,000 million times as much energy as the burning of the same weight, but no one knows whether the released energy would take a form we could utilize in a rocket or at all. There are plans which need no fuel: it is only in the form of speculation by novelists. The Welshman Cavorite, which cut off gravitation, is difficult to imagine possible; but it is conceivable that a rocket-shell might be polarized in such a way that the earth would repel it, as in J. J. Astor's moon-story of

TLS JUNE 18 1982: 679

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